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ALL EYES ON

Tyla

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Better Than Naked
Clothes That Do the Sexy for You, Page 76

Cut Off Your Parents?
Welcome to the Club, Page 14

Election Exposé

What Happens When Women Win
A Groundbreaking Investigation That Will Ignite Your Feminist Fury

PLUS

Your Favorite Summer Hotties

SABRINA CARPENTER
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COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY AMBER ASALY
COVER STYLING BY CASSIE ANDERSON

On Tyla: Loewe top and skirt. Gianvito Rossi sandals. Misho earrings.
Hair: Louis Souvestre. Makeup: Matthew Fishman. Set design: Cate Geiger Kalus.
Production: Crawford & Co Productions.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF VACATION; LAUNCHMETRICS.COM/SPOTLIGHT; BEN LAMBERTY.

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Head Over to the Dot Com

1

2

1. If you (somehow) missed Sabrina Carpenter's digital cover and truly amazing interview: Cosmopolitan.com/Sabrina-Carpenter (We also left some pics on page 8 because we're nice.)

2. To see Mackenyu's centerfold moment—page 44 if you have one of the lucky copies—in its full(er) glory: Cosmopolitan.com/Mackenyu

Trust the Process

Picture this: You're 21 years old and you're watching your vision board explode into existence. You go from studying for a degree in mining engineering to performing at *a Dolce & Gabbana after-party at Milan Fashion Week*. Then you have a viral single, "Water," that not only gets played e-v-e-r-y-w-h-e-r-e but also wins you a Grammy. Then you announce your first international headlining tour. Then you book your first cover of *Cosmo*. Then...you get injured, and you have to cancel your shows, and it sucks.

By the time of this writing, that was already a minor blip in the unstoppable forward motion that is Tyla, the now-22-year-old South African pop sensation currently holding the world in the palm of her hand. (And yes, she's back in action and you can catch her at Lollapalooza this summer.) But it's a fascinating part of every meteoric rise to fame that's all too often glossed over—the waiting. Tyla sat down with my friend Elaine Welteroth in the middle of this moment, a pop star on pause, to reflect. "I just need to slow down a bit more and just be easy on myself," she says in the intimate interview on page 46. It's a good reminder, honestly, that success doesn't mean you're winning all the time and progress isn't a straight line. Taking a beat is just part of the music.

Jessica Giles
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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sabrina carpenter

The singer, actor, and miniskirt enthusiast just wants to chat.

BY MADELEINE FRANK REEVES

STYLING BY CASSIE ANDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENDAN WIXTED

With the kind of year Sabrina Carpenter is having—opening for her idol-turned-friend Taylor Swift, going viral for her cheeky lyrics, sparking dating rumors with also-having-a-year Barry Keoghan (that was *her* name on the actor's friendship bracelet)—it would be all too easy for her to lose touch with reality. Instead, she's using her decade-plus of experience in the spotlight (some more highlights: Disney's *Girl Meets World*, Netflix's *Work It*, and five albums) to keep her feet firmly on the ground. And to cultivate a reputation for a delightful kind of straight-talking fun that spills into everything she has to say. See for yourself.

Quine Li look. Maison Ernest heels. Tiffany & Co. necklace.

Stella McCartney coat, bra, and shorts. Prota Fiori boots. Ippolita earrings. Marlo Laz necklace and ring.

Hair: Danielle Priano at Kalpana. Makeup: Carolina Gonzalez at A-Frame Agency. Manicure: Naomi Yasuda at Forward Artists. Set design: Stockton Hall at Atelier Management. Shot on location at Virgin Hotels New York City.

On Dating

"When I was younger, the one thing I always thought was why would I date this person if I didn't see myself marrying them? I just wouldn't even put energy into it. But now, I have a mentality that there are some relationships that are meant to be in your life, even if it's only for a couple of weeks."

On Her Career

"I was a kid when I saw Miley Cyrus. She was 16 and touring arenas. When that didn't then happen for me, I was like, *Oh*. I never had the instant thing, which now I feel very lucky about because I have a lot of experience. Even if I'm light-years ahead, I would rather feel that I am behind and have ambition."

More Sabrina right this way.

“Some relationships are meant to be in your life, even if it’s only for a couple of weeks.”

On Growing Up

“When I turned 24, I was like, ‘What is this year even made for?’ Because 21 is very pronounced, 25 is very pronounced, but the middle ages, oof. Even with songs, there is ‘Nobody likes you when you’re 23,’ but shit about 24.”

On the Eras Tour

“It’s almost like a Broadway show because everything is so synchronized but at the same time feels so in the moment. That’s an art. It’s really hard to teach. It’s really hard to learn. And I feel so lucky that I got to watch Taylor Swift perform. It makes me want to tour the world again.”

Top: Tory Burch dress. Paris Texas heels. Ippolita earrings. Cartier necklace.

Left: Poster Girl top and shorts. Tiffany & Co. earrings and necklace. Ippolita ring. Maison Raksha initial ring (worn throughout). Louis Vuitton bag.

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On Her Critics

"You have to be discerning, protect your energy. People comment all the time sounding like vocal instructors talking about technique, and then you go on their profile and they're literally working at GameStop."

On Her Sex Life

"My whole thing right now is whatever you do, don't get pregnant. That's the way I'm living my life. So that's my sex tip: Be smart. Use protection. But in a real way, my advice is: Do whatever makes you feel the most comfortable and safe. Boring answer."

Right: Mugler coat and boots. Cartier necklace and rings.

Below: Louis Vuitton jacket. Ohliguer rings.

"Contrary to popular opinion, I don't have a type."

THE RANCHIEST RANCH TO EVER RANCH

ONLY serious ABOUT Flavor

What It's Really Like to Cut Off Your Parents

More and more young people have entered their family estrangement era, for better or worse. But mostly for better.

BY FORTESA LATIFI

Severing ties is sometimes the right call.

IMAGES USED FOR COLLAGE: GETTY IMAGES.

Jordan was raised in a Southern Baptist household in North Carolina, where she was expected to attend church multiple times a week, accept Jesus Christ as the way to salvation, and honor her father and mother. That last point was right there in the Ten Commandments. So when she made the decision to stop talking to her dad, the choice stood in defiance of the lessons of her upbringing—but that was kind of the point. Jordan was tired of being told that women should submit to men, a belief ordained by her community. She was finished obeying.

At first, despite the fights they'd have about religion and politics, Jordan held back from completely severing ties with her dad. But after one last explosive phone call, Jordan, now 33, had a "moment of clarity," she says: "It's an extreme privilege to have a great relationship with your adult children." Her father continued to call and text her, but without receiving a sincere apology from him, Jordan didn't budge.

This kind of estrangement flies in the face of what most of us are taught as children—that family is forever and the bonds of blood cannot be replicated. Especially in cultures that value the cohesiveness of the group over more individualistic wants and needs, family is not considered a choice as much as it is a fact. But for families like Jordan's, that fact is fraying.

Twenty-seven percent of Americans ages 18 and older are now estranged from a family member, according to a national survey led by Karl Pillemer, PhD, a professor of human development at Cornell

Ashley Park
Skechers
skechers.com
THE UNO

University, who explored the topic in his 2020 book *Fault Lines: Fractured Families and How to Mend Them*. There isn't yet hard longitudinal data, he says, but lots of young people are coming forward to discuss their discontent. See: the term #ToxicFamily, currently at 2.3 billion views on TikTok.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, attitudes tend to fall along generational lines. Boomers accuse millennials and Gen Zers of being too quick to sever ties, while the younger generations push back, saying they don't have to tolerate shitty behavior just because someone is related to them.

"Norms that forced families to stick together no matter what have weakened," says Pillemer. Difficult childhood experiences, competing values, lifestyle differences, and unmet expectations may all be at play. "If the relationship is aversive over a long period of time, some young people feel they have the ability to get out of it," he explains, noting this seems to be especially true in white families. Estrangement rates tend to be lower among immigrant groups, Latine families, and Black families, he adds, where cultural nuances can make some people generally "less likely to say, 'I never want to speak to you again.'"

The year after Jordan's falling-out with her dad, he was hospitalized. She took a red-eye flight to be by her mother's side and say goodbye to her father, who died after she got there. Now, she finds herself grieving a complicated relationship. She thinks she did the right thing, but part of her grief is accepting that she'll never know, given more time, if he would have ever changed.

Threaded into so many stories like Jordan's is a similar hope—that maybe the nuclear act of permanent disconnection could eventually bring these families closer, like cutting hair to try to make it grow longer.

Rose, 22, still has that hope. She used to be "Daddy's princess," she says, before her father's heroin addiction escalated to the point that she felt forced to cut ties with him. "I hoped that he would say, 'Oh, my daughter is no longer talking to me—I should try to fix this.' Sadly, he hasn't." There are so many things she wishes she could tell him: that she graduated high school and dyed her hair, that she got a job working with disabled children and brought a boyfriend home to meet the rest of her family. Yet it all happens without him.

"I hoped he would say, 'My daughter is no longer talking to me—I should try to fix this.' Sadly, he hasn't."

Others, though, may not wish for any sort of reconciliation, says L.A.–based psychologist Quincee Gideon, PsyD, who specializes in trauma therapy. "By the time some folks go no-contact, they've spent years trying to set appropriate boundaries, live with disappointment, accept their family's flaws, and negotiate in so many different ways that estrangement is a relief."

That's how it was for 25-year-old Holly, who ended her relationship with her mother after enduring years of hostile and controlling behavior. In an email, Holly wrote, "I hope you choose a different path in this next part of life....I won't be there to see it." Her mother responded with a handwritten letter, but Holly hasn't contacted her since receiving it. She feels at peace, despite the judgment of others. "She's your mother—you should love her," a close family member told Holly, who says, "We would never tell a woman who's been abused by a partner, 'You should go back to the person who hurt you.' But we do for people with abusive parents, and it makes me very mad."

Having to continually justify the painstaking decision to cut off a family member is a daunting task. As is ending a relationship with a relative in the first place, because how a family comes together or apart is never completely rational or easily explained. It is impossibly tangled.

Every person's case is different: Some may have regrets, some may feel better off, and some, like Ant, who is in their 20s, may find freedom. After a tumultuous childhood, Ant's estrangement from their ultraconservative parents made space for them to fully and freely live as queer and nonbinary. Sometimes, their mother still calls. "She thinks that she has authority simply because she's the mother and I'm the child," says Ant. "Meanwhile, I can just hang up at any point. I've found a chosen family that has allowed me to actually be myself."

FORTESA LATIFI is a journalist with bylines in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Teen Vogue*, and more. Her work focuses on influencers, internet culture, and the way politics affects our daily lives and relationships.

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We're Already Fly. Can You Make Us Flyer?

Beauty editor-at-large **Julee Wilson** on the question everyone should be asking of their makeup brands.

One of my greatest joys in life is evangelizing about how Black folk approach beauty (it's honestly the reason this column exists). Part of that approach is a unique and hard-won love language that anyone can be inspired by: I like to call it "enhancing, not transforming," and it reflects how the best products make us look like our best selves, not like somebody else entirely.

This idea is deeply rooted in Black beauty, which is largely self-referenced: *We* know we're gorgeous; we don't need outside validation—although if you've got something to help us kick it up a notch, then great. I realize that may sound a bit cocky to some, but it's actually a truth born out of resilience and self-care.

See, historically, the beauty industry never did a good job of developing products around the wants and needs of people of color. Beauty ideals were based on white skin, and Black buying power was ignored. Most mass-market companies offered foundation shades that never went deep enough and color cosmetics that didn't complement our melanated skin. We had to recognize and celebrate our own dopeness, which was typically supported by only a few Black-founded lines, like Fashion Fair and Iman Cosmetics.

We're now in a glorious new era of a beauty industry that gives a damn—and I love it here! Those OG Black-girl-approved brands set the bar high for everyone else, proving that you can center inclusivity while still serving all with extensive shade ranges, nuanced hues, and thoughtful formulations. And that the best kind of glam is one that comes with a sense of belonging, boosting our confidence while also understanding and respecting the beauty underneath the makeup.

1. Ashunta Sheriff Beauty Vegan Matte Lip Crème in Royalty, $20, ashuntabeauty.com. **2. Fashion Fair** Set It Loose Powder in Cognac Queen, $35, fashionfair.com. **3. Chanel** Les Beiges Oversize Healthy Glow Powder Trio in Deep Mauve, $95, chanel.com. **4. Glossier** Cloud Paint Bronzer in Coast, $22, glossier.com. **5. Uzo** Blaque Liquide Eyeliner, $21, uzobeauty.com. **6. LoveSeen** Fern Lashes, $18.50, loveseen.com. **7. Bobbi Brown Cosmetics** Weightless Skin Foundation SPF 15 in Golden Almond, $57, bobbibrowncosmetics.com.

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Fashion Wants You to Have the Best Summer Ever

Wear it all, bare it all!

BY DANIELLE FLUM AND ANDREA ZENDEJAS | PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUBEN CHAMORRO

See-Through

Let's be clear: You're gonna be a show-off this season with outer layers that don't block your stunning 'fits.

Left: **Yuyeran** jacket, $26, amazon.com; **SimonMiller** dress, $395, simonmillerusa.com; **Versace** handbag, $1,895, versace.com; **Jenny Bird** ring (left), $118, jenny-bird.com; **Lady Grey Jewelry** ring (right), $260, ladygreyjewelry.com.

1. SPRWMN shirt, $345, sprwmn.com. **2. Keane** cuff, $150, keanenewyork.com. **3. Ancient Greek Sandals** sandals, $245, ancient-greek-sandals.com. **4. L'afshar** bag, $690, lafshar.com.

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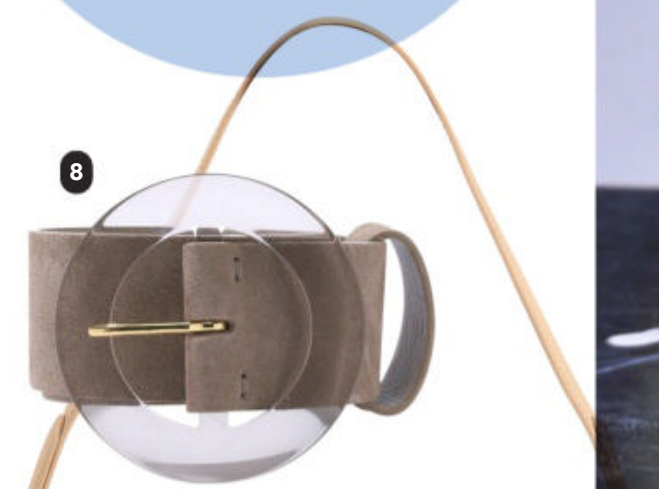

9

Honestly, Cinderella could never.

10

5. Coco and Breezy sunglasses, $249, cocoandbreezy.com. **6. Gold & Honey** hoops, $50, goldandhoney.com. **7. Alémais** raincoat, $495, alemais.com. **8. Lizzie Fortunato** belt, $265, lizziefortunato.com. **9. Mark & Graham** tote, $195, markandgraham.com. **10. Mercedes Castillo** sandals, $425, bergdorfgoodman.com.

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Stripes

What's the limit on how many you can wear at once? There is none—obviously.

Presenting: your summer vacay packing list. (It's this. Just this page.)

MORE IS MORE! *Cosmo*'s associate shopping editor Daisy Maldonado shows how piling on the patterns grabs the most attention.

DRIES VAN NOTEN

Wear it to... a pool party.

Stripes and June through August really go hand in hand, and this year, you won't be sticking to just one kind. Make a splash by layering different patterns over your swimsuit. Add a neutral sandal to balance everything out.

On Daisy: **Staud** sweater, $275, dress, $225, staud.clothing; **Marc Fisher LTD** sandals, $150, marcfisherfootwear.com; **Cult Gaia** hat, $248, cultgaia.com; **Kule** tote, $198, kule.com; **Marimekko** shoulder bag, $310, marimekko.com; **Mussels and Muscles** earrings, $429, mm-jewelry.de.

1. Lemlem bikini top and bottoms, $80 each, lemlem.com. **2. Cara Cara** top, $345, skirt, $525, caracaranyc.com. **3. Whistles** shirt, $159, whistles.com. **4. Kate Spade** bucket hat, $128, katespade.com. **5. Kurt Geiger** tote, $215, nordstrom.com. **6. COS** earrings, $60, cos.com. **7. Castañer** sandals, $280, castaner.com.

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Netting

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1

2

3

4

ALEJANDRA ALONSO ROJAS

Wear it to... your next barbecue.

The relentless sun and hot grill have nothing on the breeze you'll get in these dresses or two-piece looks. Just watch out for one-of-a-kind tan lines. Sunscreen is key, people!

5

6

7

8

This dress has me hook, line, and sinker. (Sorry.)

On Daisy: **Retrofête** dress, $795, blooming dales.com; **Themoirè** handbag, $690, themoire.com; **Heaven Mayhem** earrings, $130, heavenmayhem.com; **Lady Grey Jewelry** ring (left), $260, ladygreyjewelry.com; **Méga** ring (right), $76, megajewelry.com.

1. La DoubleJ jacket, $730, us.ladoublej.com. **2. Mango** skirt, $60, mango.com. **3. Nannacay** bag, $112, farfetch.com. **4. COS** dress, $260, cos.com. **5. Pandora Jewelry** bangle, $375, us.pandora.net. **6. Akoia Swim** bikini, $170, modaoperandi.com. **7. Sandro** dress, $370, sandro-paris.com. **8. Loeffler Randall** ballet flats, $275, loefflerrandall.com.

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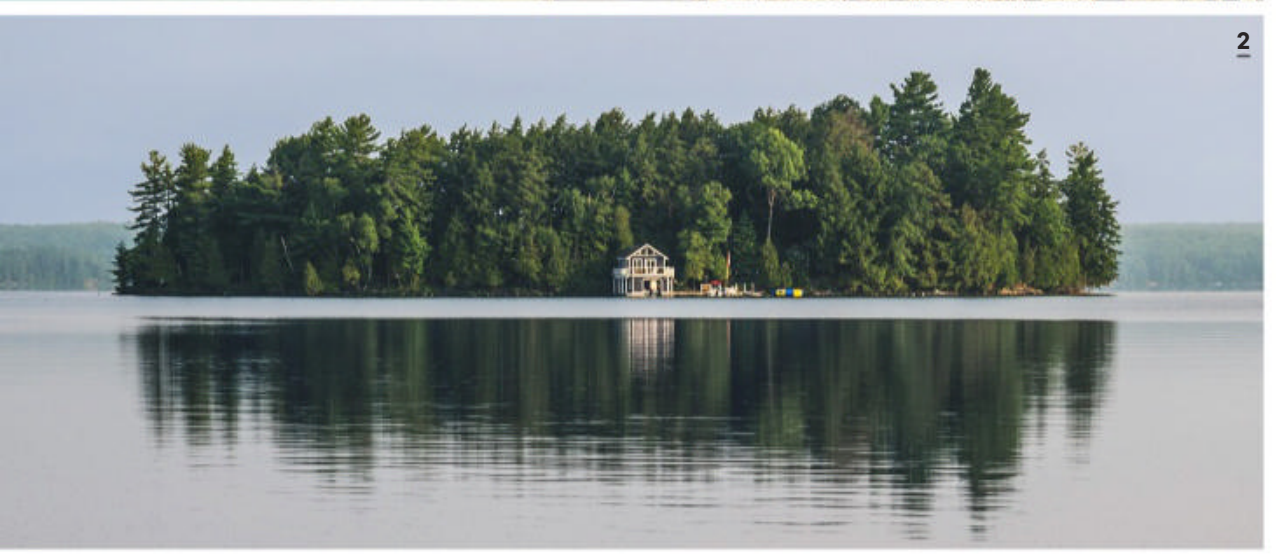
Y'all Better Not Be Sleeping on Canada

It's so much more than Niagara Falls, okay? And it's literally right there (*points up*) waiting for you and your next epic vacation.

BY HANNAH CHUBB

1



2

1. BANFF, ALBERTA

The all-season town is located within Banff National Park, where you'll find glacier-fed watering holes so turquoise, you might mistake them for the freakin' Maldives. Paddleboard or cliff-jump at Moraine Lake during the warmer months or wait until winter to ski and snowshoe on the Canadian Rockies. That's also when you can skate on Lake Louise and watch trick skiers and horse riders "skijoring" through the bar-lined streets during the annual SnowDays festival. Go ahead and google to see why *that* cannot be missed.

FLY INTO: Calgary International Airport (YYC)

YOU SIMPLY MUST: Reward yourself with hot chocolate and apple crumble after hiking to Lake Agnes Tea House.

2. MUSKOKA, ONTARIO

Folks here love to kick back with a drink in hand, especially if that drink is a Caesar, a Canadian version of the Bloody Mary. Two hours north of Toronto, the region of luxe lake towns is often called the Hamptons of the North, where you can speedboat and sunbathe by day and make s'mores and stargaze at night. It's quintessential cottage country, and by "cottage," we mean "certified mansion"—probably why celebs like Justin Bieber and David Beckham love this summer spot.

FLY INTO: North Bay Jack Garland Airport (YYB)

YOU SIMPLY MUST: Chill out at Muskoka Beer Spa, a lakeside spa that doubles as a brewery.

3. TOFINO, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canada? For surfing? Surprise! Located on Vancouver Island, this laid-back beach town has miles and miles of coastline and killer waves year-round, not to mention a smattering of craft breweries. Warning: If you visit nearby Pacific Rim National Park

WOMAN JUMPING: GETTY IMAGES. LAKE HOUSE: GETTY IMAGES.

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It's all GLAD

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FLY INTO: Tofino-Long Beach Airport (YAZ)

YOU SIMPLY MUST: Scope out a local surfing contest.

4. QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC

The fortified (as in actual forts and castle-y vibes) city three hours north of Montreal is a nonnegotiable for anyone who loves quaint cobblestone streets, incredible 17th-century architecture, and French-speaking locals (so...everyone?). It's probably the closest thing to Europe outside of, well, Europe, and its patio season pops off when it's warm (look for restaurants overlooking the St. Lawrence River). The Quebec Winter Carnival—complete with an ice palace, open-air dance parties, and winter sports galore—also deserves a spot on your bucket list.

FLY INTO: Quebec City Jean Lesage International Airport (YQB)

YOU SIMPLY MUST: Stay at Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, a lavish landmark often dubbed the most photographed hotel in the world.

5. WHITEHORSE, YUKON

Scientists are predicting a "solar maximum" in the next couple of years, which means your odds of seeing the northern lights here are better than ever. Chase them in Whitehorse, the largest city in northern Canada, where the sky is startlingly clear thanks to low light pollution. Camp out in a yurt, cabin, or dome house while you wait for the celestial show to start, then venture out for a dogsled ride, a soak in the natural hot springs, or a visit to the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre to learn more about some of Whitehorse's rich Indigenous history.

FLY INTO: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport (YXY)

YOU SIMPLY MUST: Experience the midnight sun come summer (translation: 24 hours of daylight).

6. FOGO ISLAND AND CHANGE ISLANDS, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Just a quick ferry ride from the coast of Newfoundland, you'll find 12 teeny island communities with major fishing-town energy. They have long been a mecca for artists, who draw inspiration from the surrounding otherworldly landscape (must! hike!), and for patrons of the arts, who come for the chic galleries.

FLY INTO: Gander International Airport (YQX)

YOU SIMPLY MUST: Take a boat out to spot whales, puffins, and icebergs bobbing through the waters.

SURFER: GETTY IMAGES. WOMAN IN QUEBEC CITY: ENCURSIVA ZT/@ZYANYA_TORRES. WOMAN IN FRONT OF NORTHERN LIGHTS: DANIELLE MARIE LISTER/@DANIMARIELISTER. RED HOMES: GETTY IMAGES.

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Wait, but did you know Canada is the world's second largest country? Kinda helps explain all the diverse natural beauty you're witnessing right now.

4

5

6

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We Need to Talk About Secondary Infertility

With reproductive medicine under political attack, this long-overdue conversation is more necessary than ever.

BY CHRISTEN A. JOHNSON

Danielle always thought she'd have her ideal number of kids—three, to be exact—by the time she turned 35. But as it does, life happened, and she and her husband didn't welcome their first child until Danielle was 36. That was more than two years ago.

For the past eight months, the couple has been actively working on having a second baby. Danielle had an ectopic pregnancy (when a fertilized egg implants anywhere other than the uterus, often in a fallopian tube) last October. "That and the fact that we've been trying for more than six months means our doctors are now advising IVF," she says. She always knew that getting older could affect her chances, but still: They'd conceived their first baby naturally; this felt like a surprise.

"People assume that since they've been pregnant before, it's going to be easy again," says reproductive endocrinologist Amanda Adeleye, MD, founding partner and medical director of CCRM Fertility Chicago. "That's not necessarily the case. Secondary infertility can happen to anyone."

And it does. While almost all of us are aware of infertility as a concept (it may impact up to 15 percent of couples, according to the National Institutes of Health), many have never even heard the phrase "secondary infertility"—even though it affects some 11 percent of hetero partners trying for more kids.

What Is This Really About?

The simplest way to think of secondary infertility is as an umbrella term. Rather than a hard-and-fast diagnosis, it's more of a category for a collection of separate (but sometimes linked) causes that prevent

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someone from conceiving (after trying for six months to a year) or carrying a pregnancy to term after already having given birth at least once without fertility treatments.

Yeah, it's a mouthful, but that's because this situation can be *complex*. Things like ovulation issues, hormonal disorders (such as polycystic ovary syndrome), fibroids, and endometriosis—all medical conditions in their own rights—can lead to secondary infertility in women (low sperm count can do the same for men).

About 11% of hetero couples in the United States go through secondary infertility.

SOURCE: CLEVELAND CLINIC

A prior C-section could also be at play, explains Hey Joo Kang, MD, a reproductive endocrinologist and infertility specialist at Weill Cornell Medicine's Center for Reproductive Medicine. It can be easy to forget this is a major surgery that cuts your uterus open. Sometimes that incision heals poorly, resulting in scarring that can cause inflammation, make embryo implantation harder, or block the fallopian tubes. In a 2023 study, women who'd had a C-section had a 10 percent decreased chance of getting pregnant again compared with those who'd delivered vaginally. And with C-section rates on the rise globally, the procedure may contribute to even higher rates of secondary infertility.

Then, of course, there's the aforementioned—and biggest, most common—factor: "Egg quality and quantity decline as women get older," says Shelby Neal, MD, medical director at Duke Fertility Center. Meaning, even if you've successfully already had one or more kids, aging alone could cause secondary infertility.

Why Patients Are Losing Patience

That last point may have you thinking, *Well, obviously*. It's not like our culture ever misses a chance to mention our proverbial biological clocks or remind us that "older" women may struggle to have children. But why the cognitive dissonance then? Why is secondary infertility not a just-as-well-known phenomenon as first-time infertility? It might come down to the way some doctors think and talk about all this.

"When I'm going through diagnoses with patients, I don't usually say, 'You have secondary infertility.' I try to focus on the why and how to fix it," says Dr. Adeleye. As in, she zeroes in on the potential root cause, which could take time to pinpoint, versus a more general label. That approach isn't wrong, of course—women *do* want and deserve those specifics—but getting a sense of the bigger picture sooner can also be immeasurably useful. Having a name for what's happening to you, even if it represents a broad category of complications, can help with processing a situation and, importantly, finding a community of other people in your same position.

"People assume that since they've been pregnant before, it's going to be easy again."

Danielle and her husband didn't even know that secondary infertility was a thing—or that she had it—when they were struggling to conceive their second. That is, until she did her own research, she says. "It's not like a doctor was telling me. I asked, 'So is this secondary infertility?' And my doctor nodded and was just like, 'Yeah.'"

Jennifer, 37, also went through a lot before she found out. After having one child naturally, she had two miscarriages, all while dealing with an MD who questioned whether she'd actually been pregnant at all. A new ob-gyn eventually told Jennifer that she might need to start thinking about fertility treatments if this happened again. But although his bedside manner was an upgrade, he didn't tell her directly that she may be experiencing secondary infertility. "He only alluded to it, but I came to that conclusion on my own," says Jennifer, who works in the fertility industry as a nutritionist. "You're, like, in limbo by yourself."

Networks have slowly started to form around women like Danielle and Jennifer. Resolve: The National Infertility Association runs more than 10 free virtual and in-person secondary infertility groups nationwide. And more than 10,000 women have joined secondary infertility Facebook groups for comfort and support. These communities are raising awareness, a key factor in getting women the information they need from the start and later helping them understand their options without losing even more time—something that's become downright crucial as lawmakers propose bills that aim to limit access to both reproductive freedoms *and* fertility medicine.

Luckily, there are currently secondary infertility treatments out there, including IVF and IUI, the use of egg or sperm donors, surrogates, and more. Fertility science has come a long way and has become super targeted, says Dr. Adeleye. "It's not that all of a sudden, you're 35 and you can't get pregnant anymore, but someone who is 36 might not have the same kind of needs as someone who is 41, and I'd have very different conversations with those people."

Entering those conversations armed with knowledge around issues like secondary infertility will help you stay in charge of your reproductive future and get what you really need: answers.

Women who've had a C-section have a 10% lower chance of conceiving their next pregnancy.

SOURCE: *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY*

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You're About to See Vacation Everywhere

Sunscreen. But, like, fun.

BY BETH GILLETTE

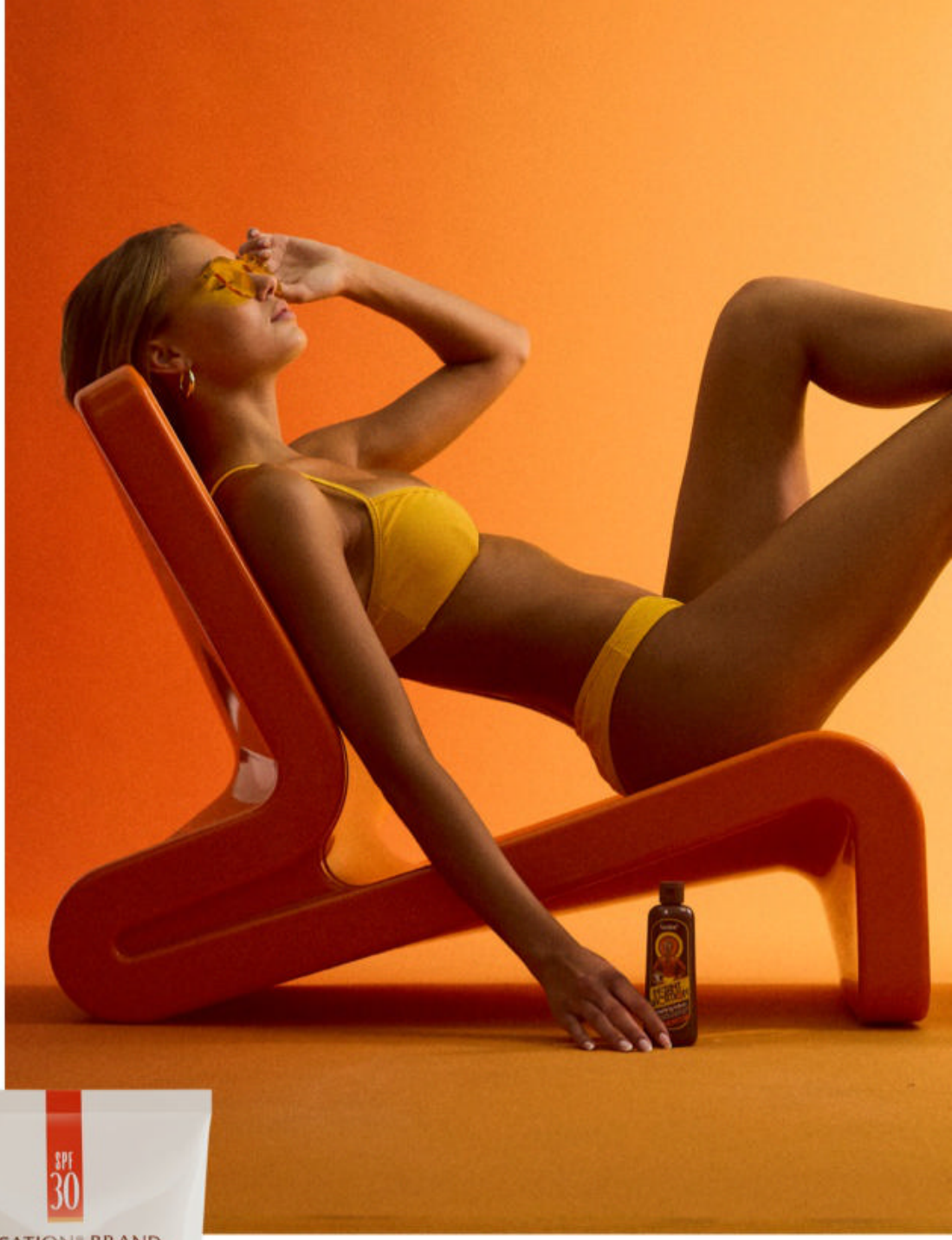
It's kind of ironic, isn't it, that something synonymous with beach weekends, boozy pool days, and backyard BBQs can be such a... snooze. A necessary one (you know by now to never—ever—skip SPF), but still: Applying sunscreen often feels more like a chore than anything else. *But what if it didn't?*

That's what Dakota Green and Lach Hall asked themselves while working advertising jobs remotely from Mexico (jealous). They started ideating with one mission in mind: making SPF a damn good time. They soon joined forces with Marty Bell, founder of the 1980s-inspired internet radio service Poolsuite, to create Vacation, which launched in 2021.

"Our Willy-Wonka-style formulas—including fluffy whipped creams and luxe oils—are unexpected and even a little bit weird and wild to use," explains Hall. Vacation's visuals, a mix of re-created old-school beauty ads and throwback sun-soaked imagery, are all part of the experience.

Products are housed in equally colorful, nostalgic packaging, and using this stuff honestly *does* feel like a whole mood. Shimmery SPF oil smells like a blend of tropical notes (banana, coconut, and orange blossom, which you can also spray on via Vacation's signature perfume). A glossy sunscreen is inspired by the OG Bain de Soleil Orange Gelée. Swiping on the SPF stick makes you (just me?) feel like you're suddenly somehow an extra on *Baywatch*.

Oh, and all the sunscreens are broad-spectrum (aka they protect against UVA and UVB rays), making Vacation's endless-summer vibes fun, for sure, but also very effective.



The Instant Vacation SPF 30, $24 (above), is all vibes.

Orange Gelée SPF 30, $23; Classic Whip SPF 30, $22; Shake Shake SPF 50 Mineral Milk, $29; Super Stick SPF 45, $24

ALL IMAGES: COURTESY OF VACATION.

THE BRAND AT A GLANCE

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Is Speed Dating...Back?

Hear us out: one outfit, one makeup application, multiple dates.

BY MADELINE HOWARD

TIM MORRIS/TRUNK ARCHIVE. CLOCK: ANTAGAIN/GETTY IMAGES.

Not yet convinced? Here you go: A pre-vetted dating pool! No swiping! Built-in icebreakers! Zero photoshopped bio pics! Also: That image that comes to mind when you hear the term "speed dating" (cue awkward singles hovering around a lonely box of doughnuts in a sad basement venue) is no longer it. Because a newer, cooler, actually effective kind has arrived to offer you the sheer relief that is IRL "scrolling" through potential dates. And driven by ever-present, totally crushing dating app fatigue, attendance at these in-person events has recently surged by 42 percent.

Generally, today's speed dating involves paying an up-front fee of around $20 to $50 (a drink or two is often included) for an event near you, which you can find via a quick Eventbrite search. Meetups of 50 or fewer people take place at the type of trendy bars and restaurants you'd actually want to visit, and the vibe is more "fun night out" than "cringey workplace mixer," thanks to curated programming and games and invitees who are interested in dating with intention.

Are some of the older-school aspects of speed dating still alive? Sure, you may find one-on-one sit-downs regulated by timers at certain events. But the fact that everyone present has paid to be there means they're likely to be taking it seriously, not just messing around as if they're in some kind of matchmaking video game. Combine that with the prospect of being able to chemistry-test lots of different potential partners in one night away from your couch and... sounds pretty appealing, right?

The scariest part is just showing up.

Like with all things in-person, the scariest part is just showing up, says Maxine Williams, founder of the speed dating company We Met IRL. Then, once you're there, make use of the expert tips below to get the most out of your evening. Good luck—and feel free to thank us on your eventual wedding site's "Our Story" page.

First, Hone Your Headspace

Sign up with another single friend to make it feel like a low-pressure GNO. If you get cold feet on the night of, sex and relationships therapist Janet Brito, PhD, says to give yourself an affirming pep talk before you leave. (Think: *I've got this. I'm brave. This will be a cool experience.*) Remember that you don't have to meet your soulmate for the night to be worth it—just consider it good practice!

Perfect Your Pitch

Before the event, text three friends and ask them what they think would be the most important things a partner should know about you. Is it your incredible work ethic? Your unmatched optimism? Your colorful creativity? Use their answers to inform what you mention to your "dates." Brito suggests having a loose script or bullet points in mind so that you go into every conversation feeling confident and prepared, which can ultimately help quell any pesky nerves.

Dress the Part

In the same way that you pick your app photos and profile prompt responses to spark interesting chats, you can create natural points of entry IRL. Wear the compliment-demanding statement earrings you got on a trip to Portugal or throw on concert merch from your favorite band. Heck, even your phone background (cute puppy pic, anyone?) can be a conversation starter. You don't need to go over the top or dress in a way that feels outside your comfort zone, but think about ways to showcase your personality.

Good Vibes Only

If you find yourself in the position of having to keep a flailing convo going with someone who's perfectly fine but clearly not your person, don't mentally check out in a way that could make you seem rude to others in the room. (Obviously, if they're actively offensive, that's a different story.) Stay engaged and ask about how the event is going for them so far, like you would for a friend. Positive energy is contagious, and your next match/potential future partner may already have eyes on you.

5 Sneakily Revealing Questions to Ask When You Have Only 5 Minutes

1. "Who in your life has influenced you the most?"
2. "Which TV shows, films, or books have inspired you?"
3. "Why *shouldn't* I date you?"
4. "What would your perfect life look like in five years?"
5. "Is there a question you'd like me to ask you that I haven't yet?"

Helping My Best Friend's Husband Collect a Sperm Sample Was the Hottest Hand Job Ever

And also surprisingly wholesome?

BY GG SAUVAGE

A few years ago, my friends May* and Charlie* were having trouble trying to conceive. They decided to have some testing done, including an analysis of Charlie's sperm to be conducted from the comfort of their home with a fancy frozen mail-in kit. The only problem? May was out of town for a month working and Charlie either couldn't or wouldn't masturbate. I didn't really care which—I was just excited to help when I threw my hat (er, hand) into the ring.

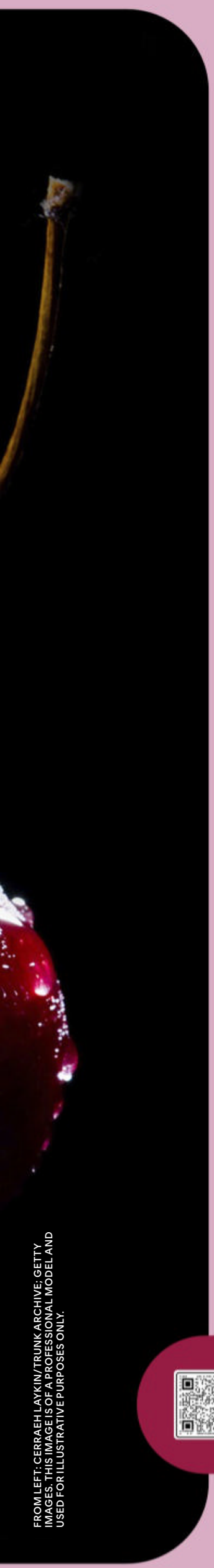
"I could totally jerk him off for you if you want," I told May over the phone when she presented her long-distance dilemma. "I've always wanted to explore my medical kink in real life."

May and I are like soul sisters, and she respects that I'm a professional sex worker at a legal Nevada brothel, so she wasn't too surprised when I casually offered to stroke her husband's cock. Plus, there's zero attraction between me and Charlie, so no threat of boundary-crossing into their relationship. We agreed to some ground rules for the sample collection: no kissing or extraneous sexual activity and my clothes would stay on, but we could go wild with dirty talk.

"Just say whatever it takes to get him there," May advised. "He likes being told what to do."

When the big day arrived, I felt like a longtime listener, first-time caller. I'd watched plenty of porn where a doctor is "helping a patient conceive" (by fucking her) or a nurse is "checking her vitals" (also by fucking her), but I'd never actually played around with my horny health care fantasies. I was maybe a little too excited as I opened their freezer, setting out the vial of sperm-preserving solution to thaw with shaky hands. They weren't paying me, but the feeling of this sex-work-adjacent favor was enough to have me aroused with determination.

*Name has been changed.



FROM LEFT: CERRAEH LAYKIN/TRUNK ARCHIVE; GETTY IMAGES. THIS IMAGE IS OF A PROFESSIONAL MODEL AND USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY.

Scan for so many more extremely sexy stories.

"Okay, sir, please make yourself comfortable. I'll be right in!" I yelled from the kitchen before joining Charlie in the bedroom, giggling a little inside at my commitment to the role-play. I instructed him to wash the entire area with soap and water, adding, "Don't dry anything off—leave it wet."

We weren't allowed to use lube lest it contaminate the sample, but water was permitted. I was loving all the specific steps in place: register the kit, warm the vial, wash the cock, prepare the jar—each one ticking a box inside my loins. None of this felt romantic or even intimate to me. It was more like the tasks gave me a safe container in which to be freaky and a nice clear line in the sand defining our boundaries. He was the patient, and I was the nurse hoping to earn a 5-star rating on Sexy Yelp.

Charlie arrived back in the bedroom, all clean and ready for me. You'd think seeing my bestie's husband naked for the first time would be alarming, but thanks to my work, I've seen it all, so I no longer experience "cock shock." Remembering May's advice, I told Charlie exactly what to do next.

"Stand here," I commanded, positioning him in view of their full-length mirror and kneeling down. He could gaze into the mirror and see my backside or glance down and watch me work—I figured options would be pleasing, and I was literally here to please. I grabbed a pair of gloves from my supplies on the nightstand, the latex giving a satisfying snap into place as I dramatically stretched my hands into them.

"Now I want you to think about May," I said, before touching him. "Close your eyes for a moment and picture her here with you." He didn't speak in return, seemingly quite nervous, but did as I said, closing his eyes and focusing on my voice. "She's in your bed, waiting for you to take her." I watched as his semi-hard erection turned stiff, just inches from my face.

"Very good, sir. Now you can open your eyes at any point, and I'm going to gently begin." I sprinkled some water on my gloves and grabbed his shaft. *I have Charlie's hard cock in my hand! WTF?!* A momentary reality check flew through my brain. He was opting to keep his eyes closed, so I decided to carry on with the visuals I'd been painting as I tugged him back and forth. "She's pulling down her panties now, spreading her legs apart so you can see all of her."

Charlie moaned—his first vocalization yet. "Good, sir, that's it. Now, I'm looking at her chart here and I see she's ovulating! This would be the optimal time to inseminate her, so I want you to crawl on the bed toward her...."

My narration was inadvertently turning me on, but I needed to get his cum into the cup and I was not about to let my personal appetite distract me. I incorporated my other hand as I increased the speed of my stroke, squeezing his balls and pulling them down, forward, then up toward his shaft.

"Ahh!" Charlie let out.

"Are you okay? Everything feeling alright?"

"Yes, yes, it's very good. I'm close."

"Very good, sir, you're doing great. Just stay right there and you let me know when you're about to cum."

After milking him a while longer, I knew it was time to take him over the finish line, so I grabbed the sterile cup and twisted the lid off. Holding it in my right hand, just a few inches from his tip, I pumped him a little harder and faster with my left and continued the story.

"She's fertile. She needs to be bred, so spread her lips open and feel how wet she is for you. Now go ahead...stick it in," I instructed.

I could feel that we were seconds away from an explosion, his cock hard as a rock—overly swollen and ready to burst.

"I'm about to cum!" he warned.

"Good! Put it all deep inside her," I yelled.

Less than a foot from my face, I watched as the most glorious eruption occurred. I held the jar close, letting my jaw fall open in amazement as spurt after spurt of gorgeous milky seed came rushing out of him. There was something so pure about not "being involved" myself. For once, I could appreciate a climax in a controlled study, my eyes solely taking in what he was pouring out.

As soon as his stream slowed to a drip, I carefully took the jar back to the kitchen, where the now-room-temp vial was waiting. Circulating the preserver solution with his ejaculate, I felt a surge of power. Something about bringing this man to orgasm, without getting naked or being touched myself, made me feel unstoppable.

I sealed up the kit and bid Charlie goodbye in a surprisingly un-awkward fashion. On the way to drop off the sample at UPS, I checked my panties—yep, ridiculously sopping wet. Like, the actual wettest I've ever been.

Not only did I get the seed deed done for my friends, but I discovered that putting on latex gloves and telling a man to give me everything he's got very much does something for me. And now, a couple of years later, Charlie and May are parents to a wonderful, healthy baby. I was excused from buying anything off their shower registry—they were just grateful for my handmade gift.

GG SAUVAGE is a writer, artist, and frequent *Cosmopolitan* contributor.

Hi, We Party Without Hangovers Now

Because $20 cocktails + next-day group chat anxiety = so last year.

BY HANNAH CHUBB

STILL CAN'T SHAKE THE HEADACHES? Look for bottles with low or zero added sugar.

And lucky for all of us, the wine industry has evolved accordingly. Its latest creation: a lineup of nonalcoholic vinos that actually—truly, seriously, we promise—taste great. (We'll pause while that sinks in and you quit imagining glorified grape juice in dusty vessels.)

This zero-proof stuff is legit sippable, delicious enough for dinner-and-drinks scenarios, and fancy enough for all kinds of toasts. It's ideal for those abstaining from booze for physical, mental, or financial health reasons or really for anyone at all, for any reason. So may we go ahead and suggest the varietals below?

A BRIGHT BUBBLY

BEST FOR: Celebrations, obviously

This beauty pops and fizzes just like the real thing. Its peach and apple notes will go great in your next-morning mimosa.

Mionetto Alcohol-Removed Sparkling Wine, from $13, reservebar.com

A FRUITY ROSÉ

BEST FOR: Poolside sips

With a hint of fizz and a kick of acidity, this refreshing fruit-forward number tastes like a hot summer day in the Hamptons. Serve it cold as hell.

Wölffer Estate Petite Rosé Verjus, $42 for 12, store.wolffer.com

A CRISP WHITE

BEST FOR: Post-work gossip

Three types of grapes give this slightly sweet blend some body-ody-ody. But don't worry—it's still easy to sip and a bit tropical, kinda like your favorite sauvy b.

Surely Non-Alcoholic Blanc, $27, drinksurely.com

A DRY RED

BEST FOR: Special nights in

Promise us you'll pair this with steak or chocolate cake (or, honestly, both). It's velvety smooth with notes of cranberry, cherry, and oak.

Grüvi Non-Alcoholic Dry Red Blend, $27 for 4, amazon.com

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COSMOPOLITAN

love, lust,
and everything in between

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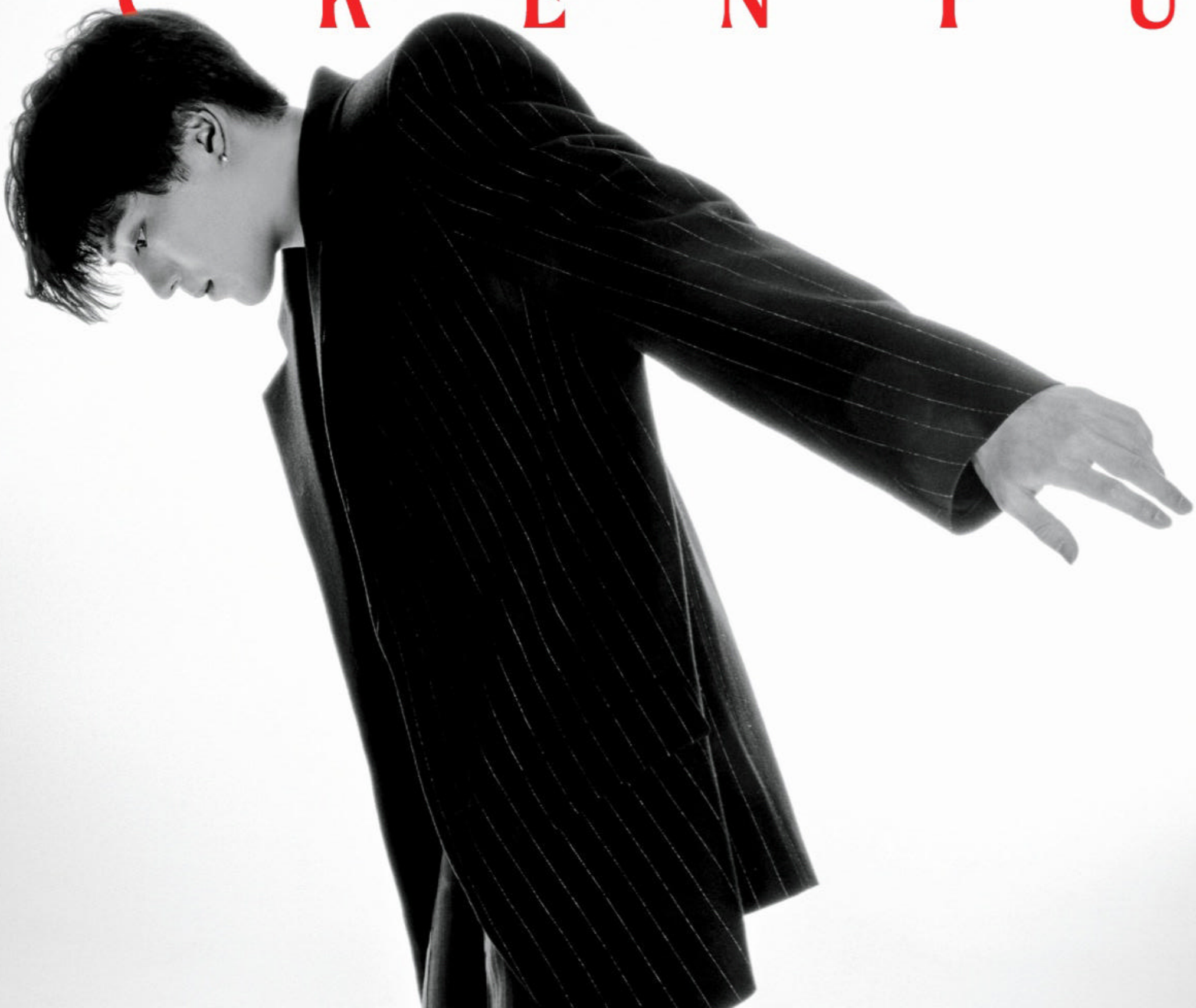
If his performance as master swordsman Zoro in Netflix's hugely popular series *One Piece* wasn't enough to make you obsessed, here's some more incentive: The Japanese American actor is the very specific kind of charming that includes sending thank-you flowers to everyone who worked on this story. And then, of course, there are these photos. Plus his very, very crushworthy leading role in the upcoming drama *House of the Owl*.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUBEN CHAMORRO

STYLING BY ANDREA ZENDEJAS

Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello jacket, trousers, and boots. INCRM earring.

MACKENYU



THE
Cosmo
Centerfold

NAME: Mackenyu
AGE: 27
SIGN: Scorpio
MAIN GIG: Actor

Dior Men jacket and brooch. INCRM earring.

Hair and makeup: Meron Weyante (@Meron_G_Meron) with Artists by Timothy Priano (@ABTP_News).

“The best way
to spend time
with a partner?
The word that
pops into my
head is
‘naked.’”

Loewe top and skirt. Gianvito Rossi sandals. Misho earrings. Aurélie Bidermann ring (index). Jacquie Aiche ring (middle).

Higher Power

There will be no "I just can't believe it!" sentiments in this story. Twenty-two-year-old pop sensation Tyla isn't interested in being a wide-eyed ingenue—she always knew she'd get here.

INTERVIEW BY
ELAINE WELTEROTH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
AMBER ASALY

STYLING BY
CASSIE ANDERSON

If you are one of the few humans left on the planet who has somehow escaped the gravitational pull of the song that has quickly become as ubiquitous as the element it's named after (spoiler: water), your days are numbered. Soon after Tyla's now-hit was uploaded to the internet last July, its uniquely hot vibe catapulted her monthly Spotify streams to 29 million and infiltrated every single one of my playlists. The accompanying choreography spawned a whole pop culture moment of its own on TikTok. Even as a 37-year-old mom, I found myself playing it on repeat while popping that thang everywhere from the beach to the Winelands during my COVID-redo honeymoon in sunny South Africa earlier this year.

I soon became fascinated with this new global pop (or "popiano," if we're being technical—more on that later) star from South Africa. And it wasn't just because of the shiny new self-titled debut album and freshly won Grammy. It was also because she's sparked nuanced conversations around the world about racial identity simply by being who she is, a proud member of the Coloured community of South Africa (more on that later too). Something that's even more powerful than a chart-topping track.

We might live in an era when trending songs disappear faster than we can put a face or name to a sound, but Tyla is poised for the kind of stardom and staying power we rarely see from breakout talent these days. As the former editor-in-chief of *Teen Vogue* and a current *Project Runway* judge and red carpet commentator, I've seen every star track imaginable. The flash in the pan, the social-media-grown sensation, the Disney-to-troubled-rebel pipeline, the rising talent thanks to the support of an even bigger star. And my takeaway on Tyla—after hanging out with her in the kitchen of her West Hollywood pad, getting to know her over platefuls of homemade South African cuisine—is that her success story doesn't fit neatly into any of these categories. Just like Tyla herself doesn't fit into any category I've known.

She's not the self-deprecating newbie or the doe-eyed foreigner who's "just happy to be here." While she is very much new to America—and over the moon about it—Tyla gives anything but "new here." She walks into every room like she belongs, because the truth is, she always knew she did.

That confidence is cooler when you realize it's *not* because she's wearing her "pop star" costume all the time. In fact, she welcomes me into her house wearing a long gray Rangers hoodie and nothing else. I'm assuming underwear. But no pants. Just a pair of mismatched socks.

She brings that wonderfully unpolished energy as we speak about her journey to get here—and why this moment is so distinctly hers.

Tell me the story behind "Water." Did you always know it would be huge?

I recorded it in my bedroom. I never thought, *This song is going to blow up.* And then I started performing it and seeing everyone singing every word. And I knew it was something bigger than what we thought. People from everywhere are listening to it and dancing to it, no matter their age. There's babies, there's old people. I just love that it's an African sound that is so universal.

It really sticks with you. How did your family react to the sexiness of the song and the dance that followed?

My mom was the person that saved me because my father was like, "What are you singing about?"[1]

A conversation I never want to have with my father ever in life.

I was like, "Nah, it's nothing bad, Dad. It's just carefree fun." He's like, "Oh, okay." And my mother was the person being like, "Relax, relax. Relax."

I imagine he gets the hype now. It is literally a Grammy-winning song. How has your life changed since it came out?

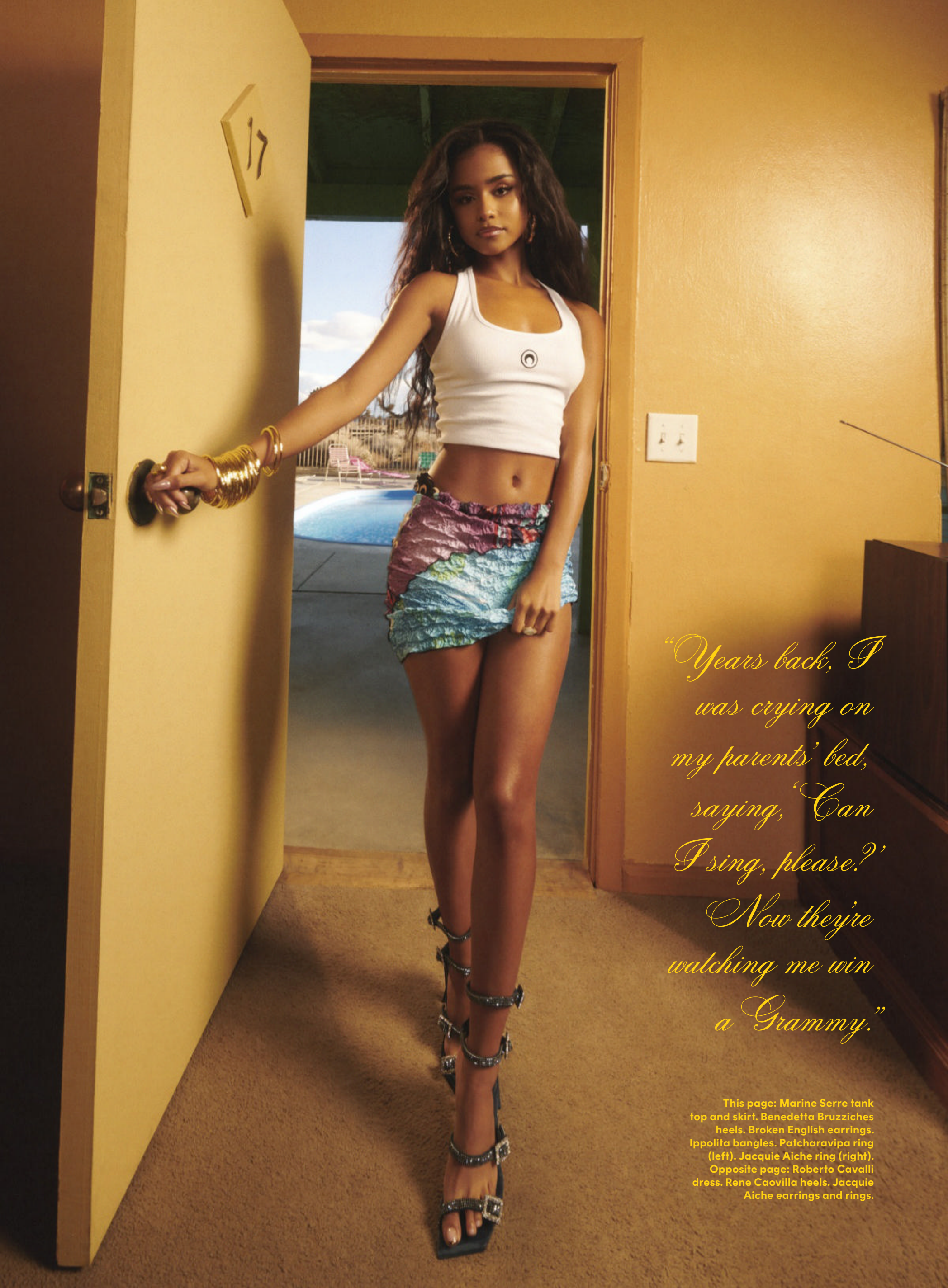
So many things have changed. I still live in South Africa, but I was able to move my parents, my family. Now they're in a safer area. My family came to Dubai with me. I was able to bring them to Europe. I'm able to show my parents the world at this age, you know? Years back, I was crying on my parents' bed, saying, "Can I sing, please? Can I just do this? I don't want to go to university." Now they are watching me win and they are seeing plaques and posters. The first time my parents got to be in America, they saw their daughter win a Grammy.

The best kind of flex! It's so refreshing to hear a new sound that stops you. I remember when I first saw you on TikTok, I stopped scrolling. I said, "Okay, who is this little baddie?" There was something about you—an effervescence, something on the inside. And it also just feels like you're having so much fun.

I don't think people really realize how much fun we[2] are having right now, even before "Water." I genuinely love this. I love creating music and visuals and promo.

1. As a quick refresher, the lyrics to the chorus: "Make me sweat, make me hotter / make me lose my breath, make me water." Not exactly dad material!
2. Tyla uses the term "we" liberally: to mean her individually, her community at large, or the people literally sitting at the table with her while we were having our conversation. In this case, she's referring to her beloved core team, composed of her longtime friends and collaborators who joined us for dinner, Lee-ché Janecke (her choreographer) and Thato Nzimande (her creative director, who she's been besties with since high school).

LaQuan Smith bodysuit and hot shorts. Femme LA heels. Jacquie Aiche earrings and ring (right). Retrouvaí ring (left).



"Years back, I was crying on my parents' bed, saying, 'Can I sing, please?' Now they're watching me win a Grammy."

This page: Marine Serre tank top and skirt. Benedetta Bruzziches heels. Broken English earrings. Ippolita bangles. Patcharavipa ring (left). Jacquie Aiche ring (right). Opposite page: Roberto Cavalli dress. Rene Caovilla heels. Jacquie Aiche earrings and rings.

How do you manage to still have fun now that it comes with a lot more pressure and higher stakes?

I have a really good team and I have really good people around me that are from home, so I'm always reminded where I'm from. And my family. I'm very much grounded. I feel like the way we grew up, we are playful and do not take things too seriously. But also, God gives me peace always. No matter what happens, I know that eventually it's going to be the way God wants it to be.

Okay, she had to take me to church today. Amen. I feel that.

I'm just telling you what it is. Because people see the music industry as evil and think you only can make it if you don't believe in God. You only can make it if you...

...are in the Illuminati? So, um, can you confirm you're not?[3]

People already think I'm in the Illuminati? Oh, now. I know some people think that's the only way, but it really isn't. God is the center of everything that we are doing, and clearly, it's working.

"Working" is an understatement. But you've faced a pretty big obstacle already in postponing your upcoming tour due to a back injury.[4] Girl, I have a good back and I can't do half of the stuff you do. I can't imagine being at this point in your career and having to cancel because of serious pain. How are you coping?

Yeah, unfortunately, I had to postpone the tour. Obviously, I wanted to do all the shows, but it didn't really make sense considering the injury and the recommendations from the doctor. I'll be back on it very soon, and I will be giving my Tygers the best show ever. I just need to slow down a bit more and just be easy on myself. I'm still recovering. At least I have medicine that helps ease the pain. It sucks, but I know God's going to bring me out of it.

And there's so much to look forward to on the other side.

With the platform I have now and how far this music reaches, the art we create together is reaching further. We're able to do bigger things. Things that we have wanted to do and planned to do but didn't have the funds or the resources to do. Now we can.

Growing up, were you the entertainer at family get-togethers?

Every single time, I was there performing. My mom would just be like, "Everybody gather, Tyla's going to sing."

What were you giving them?

I'd give them Justin Bieber. I'd give them Beyoncé. Adele. I loved singing Adele's songs. Adele was especially the girl for me. Even in school, the old compositions, I loved Adele's songs. And Whitney.

Okay, wow—you weren't playing around. Adele! Whitney!

I was shy, but I loved doing it. I grew up wanting the attention. Every single competition, every single talent show at school, I was signing up to perform. I've always had

3. The TikTok search "Tyla is Illuminati" has millions of views, so yes, I had to ask.
4. Two weeks before her debut album dropped in March, Tyla announced in a lengthy Instagram post that her highly anticipated world tour would be postponed due to "an injury that has tragically worsened." But she's still on the Lollapalooza lineup for early August, so feel free to run to Ticketmaster while wishing her a speedy recovery.

"It's been hours and hours of watching YouTube, thinking, 'How are we going to bring back pop stars?'"

this feeling. Even when I was small, I was telling people, "I'm going to be a singer when I'm older. I'm going to be a pop star." My parents obviously thought I'd grow out of it. But it's just a feeling that I had, that inner peace. I really feel like this was my calling. Even though it's been hard and we've been working, it also flowed in a way that felt like, *This is your time*.

Your grandmother is a singer too, right? How did she influence your career and how you experience your gift?

I love my gran so much. She would always tell us stories about being a singer and how she would have to basically sing to support her family. She'd take long bus rides to competitions and win. All those stories always inspired me and made me work harder to get to where I want to be years from now.

My gran always pushed me. Always. I would sing a song and she'd make me sing it over and over again, like, "Sing it again. Practice. Do this." So I'm so happy that she's also able to experience this now. Because these dreams aren't only my dreams; they're so many South Africans' dreams. My gran always speaks about it: "I can't believe, Tyla. I'm so proud of you. You made something that never felt real real."

I never had an example of how to be an African pop star. So I was literally shooting in the dark. And I know people think it came out of nowhere and we are just industry plants. But it's been years of work, years of developing, of falling, of messing up, of dreaming, sitting up for hours and hours watching YouTube videos, thinking, *How are we going to bring back pop stars?*[5] When I was younger, I would always speak about pop culture and what we would like to see from artists and what's missing.

What was missing? What were those conversations like?

An African pop star. Like, how has that not happened yet? People have an idea of Africa and it is very stereotypical. They see it as animals everywhere or think we're hungry, we're thirsty. It's just so boring! We want to change that narrative. We want people to see Africa for really what it is. We have our fashion, our stylists, our creators, our artists, our producers. We have so much and we just need the eyes. I'm happy that people are paying attention—it's amazing. But we need more people to see Africa for what it is and not just what you guys have learned in textbooks and on National Geographic.

That part. How would you describe the Africa that you grew up in?

Very lively, spiritual. Music is everything to us. Music is in everything that we do. It's in the way we move, the way we speak, the way we react to things, even the sounds we make. I just love that people are really seeing South Africa because amapiano[6] is

Avavav tank top. Isabel Marant shorts. Paul Andrew heels. Broken English earrings. Jacquie Aiche finger bracelet. Renato Cipullo ring.

5. It's clear that Tyla has studied the recent history of her art form—you can see it in her style. Her signature sexy look (high slits, crop tops with abs heavily featured) feels very reminiscent of late '90s and early aughts stars.
6. A genre that sounds like deep house and jazz had a baby. Think: synths and heavy bass lines. Tyla has coined her own take on it: popiano.
7. A dance made popular by South African performer DJ Bongz and made even more popular by RiRi. If you're interested, there are YouTube tutorials for the uninitiated.

peaking. And it's being done by a South African. I remember Rihanna doing the Gwara Gwara dance during her 2018 Grammys performance[7] and we were going crazy at home, because we were like, "They know about the Gwara Gwara?!"

But now that it's a South African being the face of it, it hits a different spot. We got used to South Africans coming to America and adapting to America, sounding American or trying to be American. Now, we are just unapologetically South African. It's just such an amazing time.

Have you felt any pressure to conform to a more American sound or style in any way?

People know how much I love my culture and where I'm from. So it's never been something where I would even want to, because the source is in South Africa. I also feel like we are changing the way people see pop right now because "Water" is an African song. Afrobeats has a log drum sound and it's in the Billboard Hot 100 with all pop songs. It's amazing.

That's really inspiring to a lot of people. It's evidence that you don't have to conform or change to be successful.

You don't.

Versace shirt. Misho earrings. Harwell Godfrey necklace and ring.

This page: GCDS tank top, shorts, and socks. Piferi platforms. Broken English earrings. Ippolita bangles. Patcharavipa ring (left). Jacquie Aiche ring (right). Renato Cipullo chain, leather cord, and T pendant.

Opposite page: Moschino jacket, bra, and skirt. Amina Muaddi platform sandals. Harwell Godfrey earrings and rings.

Hair: Louis Souvestre. Makeup: Matthew Fishman. Set design: Cate Geiger Kalus. Production: Crawford & Co Productions.

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But it's not always easy to navigate fame in a different context than the one you grew up in. Like last year when you posted a video on TikTok with the text "I am a Coloured South African" and it created a whole discussion—some would say controversy—online. In the States, the term "Colored" harkens back to the Jim Crow era, evoking viscerally painful reactions from the Black American community and dredging up very real tensions around the lasting impact of colorism in our country. But in South Africa, the term "Coloured" is commonly used to describe the vast multiracial community established legally during apartheid but that has existed since long before that—an ancestral mix of Black African, Indian, Asian, and white with their own language and customs. You ignited a nuanced dialogue about a group that the rest of the world has largely overlooked. What does it feel like to be able to carry that flag for your people?

I'm happy there's a conversation happening and that people are learning that Africa is more than just Black and white. Obviously, it gets messy and no one likes that, but I'm just happy people know we exist and have our own culture.

When people are like, "You're denying your Blackness," it's not that at all. I never said I am not Black. It's just that I grew up as a South African knowing myself as Coloured. And now that I'm exposed to more things, it has made me other things too. I'm also mixed-race. I'm also Black. I know people like finding a definition for things, but it's "and," not "or." As young people, we have a platform where we can speak about things like this, things that are new and controversial and scary. It's a perfect time for this conversation to happen.

Why do you think now is the perfect time?

Because of African music and where we are right now. People are opening up to us. They are loving our music. They're loving our dance moves. But now it's about more than that. You need to understand where it comes from and why we are that way.

Well said. I feel like you are representing a taste of the diversity of Africa.

I represent people that didn't know they could make it in America. I thought you had to be American to be famous. That's why I loved Rihanna, because I was like, "Okay, she came from somewhere else and she did it."

This brings me to the idea of legacy and creating your own lane. You do get compared to Rihanna a lot. And even though you admire her, I imagine that can add pressure for someone who's trying to figure out who they are. How do you feel about that at this point in your career?

It's flattering because Rihanna is Rihanna. It's a compliment. But at the same time, I'm my own artist. I'm Tyla. And I know as people get to know me and my music, they will see me as just Tyla. So I'm fine with it now. People want to tie me to something familiar to them, cool. But at the end of the day, we're doing something no one's done before, and it can't really be compared to anyone.

Young Love on the Streets of Mexico City

OUR COUPLE SPOTTING SERIES HEADS SOUTH TO BRING YOU MORE DELIGHTFUL PAIRINGS.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUBEN CHAMORRO

INTERVIEWS BY MAXWELL LOSGAR

Saskia, 29, business owner; Kevin, 32, artist and entrepreneur

Years together: 3

Saskia: I saw him on my friend's Instagram.

Kevin: She followed me, and then one night, she posted a beautiful photo in Tulum. I commented, "This is art."

Saskia: I was like, *Damn, that's bold. You're gonna comment on my pic?*

Kevin: Then she replied to one of my Stories. Our first date lasted from, like, 10 a.m. until midnight.

Lorenzo, 32, dancer and model; Pan, 39, creative director

Years together: 2

Pan: When he was new to the city, I took him out to some of my favorite places.

Lorenzo: He impressed me. We're actually just coming from Plaza...

Pan: ...Popocatépetl. The first place we met.

Lorenzo: We went there to take some photos this morning after a tai chi class.

Shot at the Volga hotel's rooftop pool.

Salvador, 38, designer and tattoo shop owner; Scott, 34, chef and restaurant consultant

Years together: 2.5

Scott: We live a block away from one another.

Salvador: We each have two cats. That's why we haven't moved in together yet.

Scott: It's gonna happen soon.

Salvador: We need a house. For the cats.

Andrea, 31, accessories editor; Javier, 36, tech sales manager

Years together: 8

Javier: Every time we go to a restaurant, I make a note in the reservation that it's her birthday. I think it's funny.

Andrea: They bring out cake. One time, all the waiters came and sang to me.

Javier: And they were like, "So you're a Scorpio, right?"

Andrea: And I was like, "Uh...yeah. Sure."

Shot at the Volga hotel.

ON ANDREA: LA DOUBLEJ DRESS; BEN AMUN BANGLE; BRANDON BLACKWOOD BAG.

Marlene, 34, digital strategist and influencer marketer; Christian, 35, brand director

Years together: 9

Christian: We went to a Caloncho concert yesterday.

Marlene: He's a Mexican artist who is very special to us.

Christian: Sí. He sang our wedding song, and it was emotional.

Marlene: It was amazing. It was the first time we saw him live.

Fabiola, 28, art curator; Santiago, 37, filmmaker

Years together: 8.5

Fabiola: He stole my drink at a party, and then we started making out.

Santiago: We chatted first, and *then* we made out.

Fabiola: He doesn't remember any of it.

Santiago: I just remember I got a phone number from a very cute girl. So I texted her the next day.

Fabiola: We moved in together two months later.

Shot at Elora Restaurante.

Oscar, 29; María José, 29, real estate lawyers

Years together: 5

María José: We met in law school. I missed a class and I was kind of a nerd, so I asked him for his notes. But he didn't take any, so that was a terrible approach.

Oscar: We saw each other in the hallway, and I was really ashamed because I didn't get her notes that time. That was the starting point of our relationship.

María José: We started having cafés at university.

Oscar: Now it's been almost one year since we became husband and wife.

Celeste, 35; Rodrigo, 36, furniture designers

Years together: 14

Celeste: We're together always. We work together; we live together. We really enjoy going on walks.

Rodrigo: And we like cooking together.

Celeste: Even designing together.

Rodrigo: When I get stuck on the overall concept of a design, she will fine-tune it to look the way it should look.

Shot at the interior atrium garden at the Volga hotel.

Montserrat, 31, chef; Fabiola, 28, creative director

Years together: 1

Montserrat: She was my friend's neighbor.

Fabiola: Her friend said I needed to meet her. The next day, I was at her place for martinis.

Montserrat: I'm usually not a U-Haul lesbian, but we haven't stopped hanging out since.

Fabiola: Two weeks after we met, she was like, "Let's go on a trip to the beach for a week." We were naked on the beach in Zipolite, in our little bubble.

Montserrat: We still are in our little bubble.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Florence Sullivan

HOW TO SUCCEED IN OFFICE

More women than ever have won elected positions in this country—but the power to be effective doesn't always come with the job. In a first-of-its-kind project, *Cosmopolitan* teamed up with Pivotal Ventures* to define the challenges women in political office currently face, why those are a big deal for *everyone*, and how the solutions outlined here have the potential to change our lives for the better.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Khadija Horton

REPORTING AND WRITING BY Jamie Ballard, Hannah Chubb, Sascha de Gersdorff, Jessica Goodman, Jasmine Hyman, Annabel Iwegbue, Daisy Maldonado, and Nicole Pasulka

*Founded by Melinda French Gates, Pivotal Ventures is an investment and philanthropic company that has committed $1 billion toward expanding women's power and influence in the United States.

TO: Women in elected office
CC: All women, everywhere
FROM: Stacey Abrams, former Georgia House Minority Leader and gubernatorial candidate

RE: We can do this

From 2003 to 2006, I served as deputy city attorney of Atlanta, appointed by Shirley Clarke Franklin, the first woman to lead the city and the first-ever Black woman elected mayor of a major southern city. During that time, I watched her tackle issues as divergent as potholes, the potential seizure of the city's water system by federal regulators, and the devastating impact of persistent homelessness. Mayor Franklin brought to the task an enviable résumé; she also had a catalog of allies that could bolster her creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Yet she never forgot that she held a rarified post with unusual access, and I watched as she extended her resources to lift other women into and through public office.

When I decided to run myself, I chose the Georgia legislature. State governments hold immense control over our daily lives, from our education to our work schedules to our bodily autonomy. But their ranks are disproportionately male, white, and affluent—just one reason the struggle for female political candidates does not end upon taking the oath. From committees to capital, from press coverage to political promotion, gender has an impact.

When women in legislative offices request committee assignments, they are often relegated to "social" programming: children, the elderly, possibly health. You can typically count on one hand the number of women appointed to Ways and Means, Appropriations, Finance, Transportation, or Utilities—the so-called "money committees" with the greatest cache. The lobbyists who fund outings where decisions are made only invite those who already have a seat at the table. And when re-election rolls around, campaign coffers are filled for those with the authority to regulate capital.

We need women in these arenas—in all arenas—to level the outcomes for everyone. Women provide a vital service; they are routinely cited as more collaborative, willing to work across ideological lines, and more likely to serve the public good. Yet once inside the rooms where it happens, women will be expected to learn fast, stay late, be everywhere, and do almost anything...with a fraction of the support a male counterpart might secure.

I never forgot this imbalance during my seven years as Georgia House Minority Leader. There, I leveraged what I'd learned from Mayor Franklin and my mother and other women who got there first. I intentionally worked with fellow legislators, local officials, school board members, and the like who struggled to translate their newfound positions to gain a toehold in power. I held fundraisers, hosted training sessions, recommended colleagues for job opportunities, and hired women into positions of influence. We scheduled events with childcare, and we picked times when both parents could likely attend.

The barriers are clear, but within all the challenges for women in office lies the ability to adapt and overcome—if the rest of us are willing to help. Now is the time to go beyond the poetry of winning elections into the tough work of owning power. And I know together we can get good done.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON ALL OF IT

Much of the data in this story reflects responses from a nationally representative group of American women surveyed by *Cosmopolitan* and Pivotal Ventures in January 2024. We polled more than 2,100 people ages 18 and older on how they think about women in elected office and the challenges they face in doing their jobs. For all of our surprising findings, visit Cosmopolitan.com/how-to-succeed-in-office.

ABRAMS: KEVIN LOWERY. DAUGHTRY: MICHELE STAPLETON. GILLIBRAND: OFFICE OF SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND. DUCKWORTH: OFFICE OF SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH. WOMAN PUSHING STROLLER: PAMELA HANSON/TRUNK ARCHIVE. ALL OTHER IMAGES USED IN COLLAGES: GETTY IMAGES.

89%

of you say it's important for your own lives that women are able to succeed across all levels of office...

yet

82%

think it's challenging for women in local elected office to be successful at their jobs.

WAIT, HOW DO I...?

Newbie quandaries, veteran support.

Q: When I first got elected at 25, I was the youngest woman in the Maine legislature. Comments online sexualized me, discussing what I looked like and what I wore. How do I deal with people who use my appearance and gender to try to disenfranchise me or limit my voice?

—MATTIE DAUGHTRY, MAINE STATE SENATOR

A: The same thing happened to me when I was first elected. Many staffers thought I was an assistant and asked for my ID when I got on the senators' elevator. Call out people who address you in inappropriate ways or discriminate against you for your age and gender. Then when another young woman is elected to your legislative body, help her. Constantly pay it forward.

—KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW YORK

WAIT, HOW DO I...?

Newbie quandaries, veteran support.

Q: I sometimes have to choose between events with stakeholders and a soccer game for my son. Or I get home and didn't get to say good night. How can I cultivate the right professional relationships while being there for my family?

—YA LIU, NORTH CAROLINA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

A: Consistency is what's important. I set very clear boundaries, and it takes an extraordinary circumstance for me to violate them. Next week, I have parent-teacher conferences on the same morning as a very important FAA hearing, so I had to reschedule the conferences—but I didn't cancel them; I rescheduled them.

—TAMMY DUCKWORTH, U.S. SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS

39%

of you believe elected women are criticized on social media much more than their male colleagues.

THE UNITED STATES OF WOMEN

PERCENTAGE OF ELECTED STATE LEGISLATURE OFFICES HELD BY WOMEN

- 0–15%
- 15–30%
- 30–45%
- 45–60%

Pay often varies widely between state and municipal offices. In **MINNESOTA**, state legislators make about $52,000 per year, while Minneapolis City Council members earn around $110,000.

In **CALIFORNIA**, Los Angeles mayor Karen Bass is the first woman and the second Black person to lead the city. Thirty-four of the mayors of America's 100 biggest cities are women—and 50 percent of those are women of color.

In 2019, **NEVADA** became the first state to have women hold a majority of state legislative seats. It's now the only state that does, with the highest percentage (60!) in the country. West Virginia, at 12 percent, has the lowest.

ARIZONA has one of the highest proportions of women serving in municipal elected office (roles like mayor or city council member). The mayor of Phoenix, Kate Gallego, is part of a "mom majority" city council.

In 2022, **COLORADO** became the first state to pass a bill giving state legislators 12 weeks of paid family leave. No other state formally offers legislators this benefit.

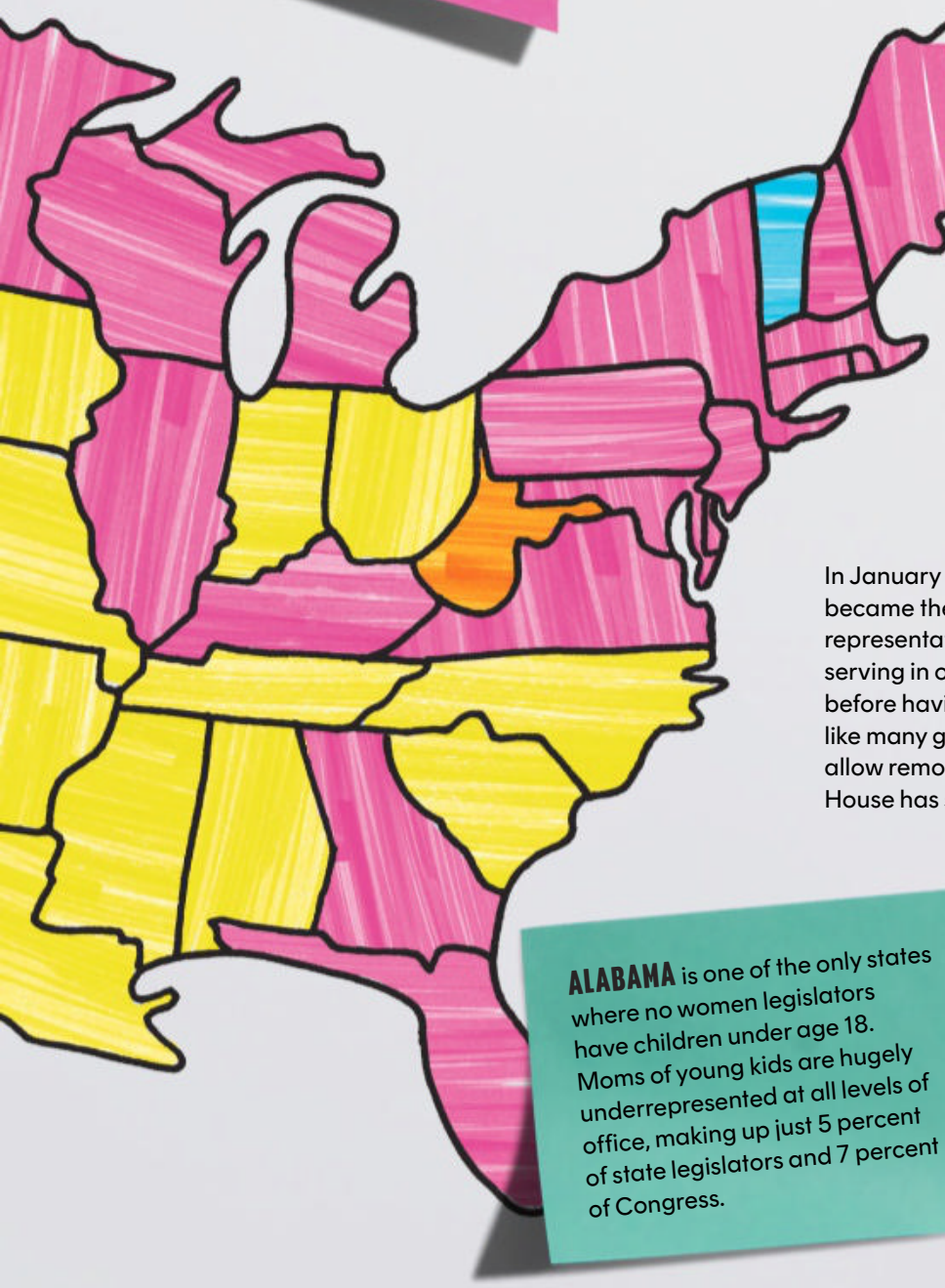
ALASKA is one of the only states with on-site childcare for legislators. Meanwhile, 12 states, including New Jersey, Tennessee, and Illinois, allow officeholders to use their campaign funds to pay for childcare costs directly related to official duties.

We worked with the **Center for American Women and Politics** (CAWP) at Rutgers University and other organizations to map out where women currently hold elected positions—and the sometimes frustrating, often empowering, always complex landscape they operate in.

In 2020, Emily Weber was the first Asian American woman elected to the **MISSOURI** state legislature. Currently, there is a total of 98 AAPI women serving in state legislatures across the country.

NEW YORK's governor, Kathy Hochul, is the highest-paid governor in the country (she earns $250,000 per year). New York also pays its state legislators $142,000 per year, more than any other state. Meanwhile, state legislators in New Mexico make an annual salary of $0 (they're paid a small per diem instead).

In 2013, **NEW HAMPSHIRE** was the first state to send an all-female delegation (two U.S. senators and two U.S. representatives) to Washington, D.C. Today, three of these four positions are still held by women.



In January 2020, Josie Raymond became the first **KENTUCKY** state representative to give birth while serving in office. She took two weeks off before having to return to work, because like many governing bodies, hers didn't allow remote voting. (The Kentucky House has since changed this rule.)

ALABAMA is one of the only states where no women legislators have children under age 18. Moms of young kids are hugely underrepresented at all levels of office, making up just 5 percent of state legislators and 7 percent of Congress.

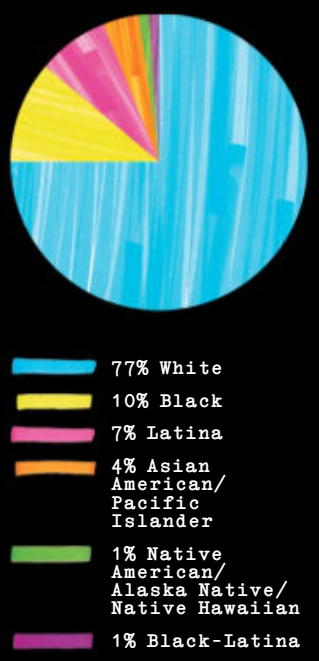
In 2020, **OKLAHOMA** elected the country's first openly non-binary state legislator, Mauree Turner. That same year, Delaware elected the first openly transgender state senator, Sarah McBride, and a historic number of openly LGBTQ+ people—including candidates in Kansas, Georgia, and Florida—were elected to state legislatures.

28%

of elected officials in Congress are women. Ten years ago, that number was less than 19%.

32%

(the highest percentage ever) of the elected executives running our states in positions like governor, lieutenant governor, and treasurer are women. They are...



2,428

of the

7,386

state legislature seats in America are held by women.

HELP FOR THE REALLY HARD STUFF

Of the many unique pain points women in office face, these six are the most prevalent and most disruptive to getting the job done well. Or they *were*....

IT'S ALL SO EXPENSIVE

THE SITUATION

"Elected positions were created in the image of white landowning men," says Ghida Dagher, CEO and president of New American Leaders, a group that empowers immigrants, refugees, and their allies to run for and succeed in office. "And these jobs continue to be arranged in a way that supports and reinforces that structure of power." Case in point: 45 states pay their legislators a salary that falls below the state's median household income; other states pay...nothing at all. Meaning, if you're an elected woman without generational wealth, a previous high-paying career, or lots of spousal support, you could be left scrambling to make ends meet—both personally *and* professionally. You might need to take on a second job to cover expenses like work-related travel or childcare and health care (which may not come with elected roles). Or to pay your own teams, because state- and local-level positions rarely come with enough money to hire staff.

SZCZEPANSKI: NICOLE MOULTON. PORTER: OFFICE OF REPRESENTATIVE KATIE PORTER.

WAIT, HOW DO I...?

Newbie quandaries, veteran support.

Q: We are a citizen legislature in New Mexico, meaning my elected role has no salary, so I also have a separate full-time job. I have to make hard choices on a daily basis about how I spend my time. How should I think about balancing all my *many* responsibilities?
—REENA SZCZEPANSKI, NEW MEXICO STATE REPRESENTATIVE

A: It's helped me to redefine the elusive work-life balance as being the kind of active balance that it takes to ride a bike, not an equilibrium. Sometimes you pedal uphill and it's really hard, sometimes you coast downhill and it's easier, and sometimes you're taking a break for water. Bottom line, you're staying on the bike, rolling over bumps, and moving closer to your destination.
—KATIE PORTER, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA

A TIMELINE FOR EXACTLY WHAT TO DO AFTER WINNING

From folks who've been there before.

The Day After the Election

Reach out to the local reporters who will cover your term, says Simone Leiro, chief communications officer of The States Project, which supports state legislators. Make sure they have your phone number, then set up off-the-record, one-on-one meetings where you share your top issues. This is the start of a meaningful, mutually beneficial relationship.

62% of you think higher salaries would help more women succeed in office.

WHAT IT'S LIKE

When Mesha Mainor was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 2020, she quickly faced a startling reality: Her job had no preexisting budget; she could only be reimbursed up to $7,000 per year for anything she spent on communicating with constituents. "I didn't use any of my budget in my first year," says Rep. Mainor, who had quit her job in outpatient rehabilitation to run for office. "I wasn't in the position to pay for the things I needed, then wait for reimbursement." Instead, she did everything from crafting social media posts to sending out newsletters herself. It was far from ideal, she says, but it did force her to learn every single aspect of the job, and it made her realize what kind of person she needed to hire once she was able to raise funds (which, yes, she also did herself).

HOW WOMEN ARE MAKING IT BETTER

In an effort to help close the gender gap in political donations, the **Electing Women Alliance** creates communities of women donors to support female candidates. And the **Leadership Now Project** highlights women candidates that its business leader membership can support.

THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS SH*T

THE SITUATION

Once women take office, any lines between their personal and professional lives tend to disappear, says Larissa Martinez, founder and president of the Women's Public Leadership Network, an organization that supports women running for and elected to office. "Your job is to be accessible to the public." As in, *very* accessible: If, say, you're a legislator who makes a controversial decision about housing, people will feel entitled to know everything about your own home. You'll also be on the job 24/7, whether that looks like phoning an important donor at a moment's notice or being approached by voters while grocery shopping. And you're dealing with this pretty much on your own, says Martinez. "There aren't a ton of resources to help manage these considerations."

WHAT IT'S LIKE

"I get phone calls, emails, and messages around the clock from people who have questions or need my help," says Sarah Compo Pierce, the mayor of Watertown, New York. She knows going out in public—including when she's trying to enjoy some downtime—means running into and listening to constituents, although she'll often ask for people's contact information and if she can follow up with them during more typical working hours. "The key is knowing when to take a break," she adds. Even if that break means putting her daughter to bed...before logging back on to catch up on emails.

HOW WOMEN ARE MAKING IT BETTER

Sister District links up state legislators from different areas around the country to collaborate on problem-solving, including around work-life balance challenges.

32% of you say it would be very difficult to succeed in an elected role that doesn't offer health insurance; 25% feel the same way about paid leave and childcare.

GOVERNMENT DOESN'T CARE IF YOU'RE A MOM

THE SITUATION

Forty-eight percent of Americans think having children at home is a disadvantage for elected women, per Pew Research Center data—and they may be right. "These jobs are not designed for motherhood," explains Liuba Grechen Shirley, founder and CEO of Vote Mama, which supports mothers and parents in office. Most legislative workplaces have unpredictable voting schedules, making it hard to lock in childcare. Remote voting is a rarity, complicating schedules for parents with newborns, and on-site childcare can be nonexistent. Combined with frequent travel, these roadblocks can feel sky-high—often *too* high for moms of young ones. Says Grechen Shirley: "We literally have more men named John serving in the U.S. Senate than moms of minor children."

WHAT IT'S LIKE

When she was 30 and a first-term state representative, current Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer returned to work after having her first child. A big study on the importance of breastfeeding had just come out: "So many legislators sent me copies of that article," she says, "yet the legislature had no place for me to nurse." Whitmer asked the then–senate leader to set aside a room for her, but she was denied and ended up squeezed into a colleague's space that was "90 percent taken up by a copy machine." It was, she says, dehumanizing. She now advises others to "band together and bring pressure on leadership" to pass policies on remote voting and nursing spaces.

HOW WOMEN ARE MAKING IT BETTER

Vote Mama connects moms in office to one another so they can exchange tips and information; its foundation aims to make government a more parent-friendly work environment.

One Month Before You're Sworn In

Ask your local board of elections how to officially close your campaign so you don't get fined, says Amanda Litman, founder of Run for Something, which helps people run for office. Lots of districts have strict rules about things like removing yard signs and how much money you can keep in your campaign account.

Three Weeks Before You're Sworn In

Prep your family and close friends, says Georgia State Representative Mesha Mainor. "Once you're in office, it's a sacrifice. You won't be able to be there for them like before." She advises starting with, "I'm not going to be around the way I used to be, but that doesn't mean I love you any less."

THE LEARNING CURVE IS STEEP

THE SITUATION

Very few bodies of government have extensive formal training that helps first-timers get up to speed. "Lawmakers come into this blind," explains Gaby Goldstein, cofounder of Sister District, which supports elected officials in state legislatures. People have questions from "How do I get on a committee?" to "Where do I even sit?" And because fewer women have held elected positions in the past, there are fewer women around to explain how things are done, says Goldstein. "There's a tremendous knowledge gap that's compounded for women who may not have had the same experiences and privileges that men have had."

45% of you think a lack of support from political establishments makes elected women's jobs harder.

WHAT IT'S LIKE

When Kentucky State Representative Josie Raymond took office in 2019, her first order of business was to work on the state budget, which included proposed road plans. "I didn't know anything about those," she says. "Nobody new did. The only people who really understood were full-time analysts who'd been working at the capitol." So Rep. Raymond did what she'd do at any new job: She went straight to those experts for a crash course. "I wasn't embarrassed to be like, 'I don't understand this at all,'" she says. "Younger women especially can do a 'fake it till you make it' thing. And you can feel vulnerable going in after a campaign and saying you don't get something. But seeking out the people that do will keep you from asking stupid questions in publicly televised committees."

HOW WOMEN ARE MAKING IT BETTER

National organizations like **Women In Government** can help elected women with understanding legislation, networking, and finding mentors. Separately, the **Oasis** leadership network offers know-how support to women and non-binary legislators. And **Higher Heights for America** works with Black women in office to build political power and leadership skills.

SEXISM IS VERY MUCH (STILL) A THING HERE

THE SITUATION

Sexism ranked as the largest perceived challenge for elected women in our *Cosmopolitan*/Pivotal Ventures poll. And while those on the ground tend to agree, the discrimination they face isn't always blatant (although there's that too). Sexist microaggressions can be a huge source of stress and frustration for women in office, says Cynthia Richie Terrell, executive director and founder of RepresentWomen, a group focused on systemic interventions that increase women's representation. Think: male colleagues making decisions at 10 p.m. at a bar instead of during work hours. Or male elected officials asking female elected officials to pick up coffee. Or male lawmakers consistently interrupting female lawmakers when they're speaking.

WHAT IT'S LIKE

Before running for mayor of Lexington, Kentucky, Linda Gorton sat on the city council for 16 years. That valuable experience didn't stop someone from posting on Facebook while Gorton was campaigning, "Why don't you just go back to the kitchen and put your apron back on?" There was also the time, early in her tenure as mayor, when she arrived at an event where a mayoral parking spot had been reserved. She asked a man to move so she could steer into it, and he replied, "The mayor wouldn't like it if you took his parking space."

Nearly 1 IN 3 of you think sexism is the most significant challenge women in office face. (Gen Z is the most likely group to have this POV.)

HOW WOMEN ARE MAKING IT BETTER

Women's Public Leadership Network offers training sessions and orientations to help newly elected lawmakers deal with tricky situations, including sexism in the workplace. **Vote Run Lead** also helps women working in state legislatures tackle these issues, starting at the candidacy level.

BEING IN OFFICE ISN'T ALWAYS SAFE

THE SITUATION

According to a recent report from the Brennan Center for Justice, 43 percent of state legislators have experienced threats or physical attacks within the past three years—and nearly 90 percent said they experienced harassment, intimidation, or stalking, with women reporting more abuse than men (and people of color reporting more abuse than white people). "The root of this is hyperpolarization," says Dagher. "It fueled keyboard warriors who forget this is a job folks are doing for the collective good; they make very personal attacks on women who are

Two Weeks Before You're Sworn In

Research your district's public information laws, says Litman. These dictate which meetings and documents are public record. Know them so you don't mistakenly keep certain emails or conversations private.

The Week Before You're Sworn In

Read your legislative bylaws, says Rep. Mainor. These can be longer than your favorite novel, but they lay out everything you must know about how the legislative process works in your body of government.

Day One on the Job

Write down your main priorities, says Michigan State Senator Stephanie Chang. "If you're scattered, it can be a challenge to accomplish what you came to do." On her first day, she mapped out 5 to 10 bills plus her social media goals.

leading." As a result, half of the elected women surveyed in the Brennan Center's report said they were less willing to serve. Meanwhile, 31 percent of mayors polled by CAWP have considered leaving office because of this kind of hostile environment.

WHAT IT'S LIKE

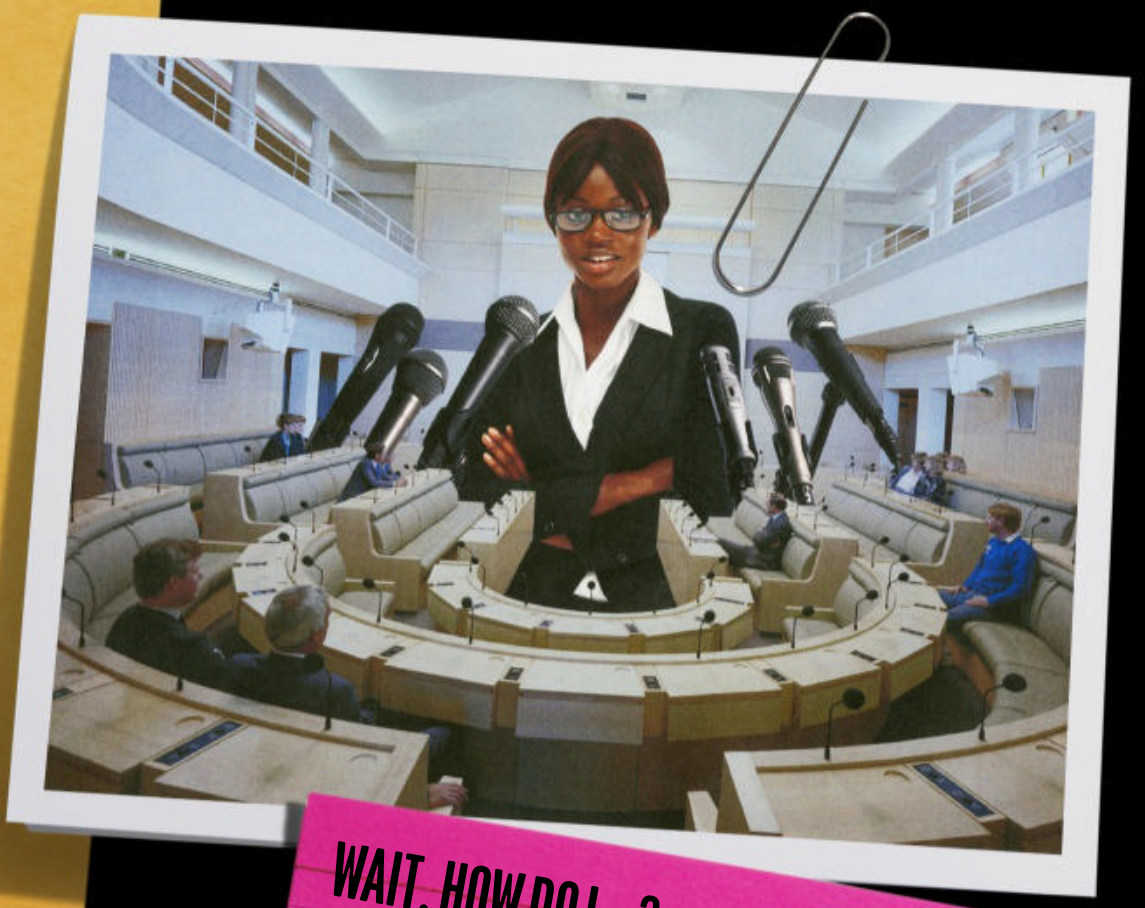
Earlier this year, Florida State Representative Anna Eskamani posted a work-related Reel, partaking in a popular meme. "Within 24 hours, the comments were terrible things, including comments about my body and weight and that I should be hung from a lamppost." She reported the incident to Instagram and has since developed other ways of dealing with political violence: She created a presentation to train her staff on de-escalation tactics when they're confronted with aggression. Her office doesn't have a dedicated security guard or check-in desk, so she installed security cameras and locks on the doors during business hours, only letting guests inside once she knows who they are and why they're there. And after dealing with a stalker, she only posts photos on social media once she's left a location. "I'm always thinking about risk management," she says.

HOW WOMEN ARE MAKING IT BETTER

New American Leaders' Elected Officials Network provides a forum where first- and second-generation Americans can trade ideas on how best to keep themselves and their families safe from harassment. The **States United Democracy Center** also offers anti-political-violence resources to state and local officials.

59% of Black women say female politicians are criticized "much more" than male politicians by their peers; 47% of Hispanic women and 45% of white women agree.

HODGES: JAKE ZAEPFEL PHOTOGRAPHY. NDEBUMADU: KATE ANDREYA.



WAIT, HOW DO I...?

Newbie quandaries, veteran support.

Q: Black women legislators are expected to advance justice, to work ourselves to the bone in service of our position. There's an assumption that we're strong. The message is, "You got this, you don't need help"—but we do. How can I gain ongoing mentorship while in office?
—LA'TASHA MAYES, PENNSYLVANIA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

A: There is support out there, but it may be where you least expect it. Women in other professions will step up and say, "I know what you're going through." It's important to build common cause with folks who have similar experiences. Become a support group as you go through it together.
—YVETTE CLARKE, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW YORK

WAIT, HOW DO I...?

Newbie quandaries, veteran support.

Q: I'm very often the only woman in the room. But at events, I will have to bring my husband, Ed, so I'm not the subject of gossip. One time at a meet and greet, two people from my community asked, "What are you doing? Does Ed know you're here?" How can I cope with the double standards that lead to harmful rumors?
—TREVA HODGES, MAYOR OF CHARLESTOWN, INDIANA

A: Right before I decided to run for office, a friend said, "If you don't tell your story, someone else will—and you may not like their version." I've run with that advice ever since. Take control of the narrative by defining it on your own terms. If you get a question like this again, respond, "Knows I'm here supporting the community? Yes, and I can't wait to tell everyone how great it's going!"
—ROXY NDEBUMADU, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER OF BOWIE, MARYLAND

Day Three on the Job

Pick out three outfits you can wear to events like school board meetings or fundraisers, suggests Litman. "Like any professional armor, they can make you feel confident, and you've now relieved yourself of decision fatigue."

Week Two on the Job

Identify which committee assignments match your passion, says Represent-Women's Cynthia Richie Terrell. Do your homework on its issues and key players, then follow the committee chair on social media and ask them to lunch. "Make it clear you have experience or perspective that's useful," she adds.

THE INNER CIRCLE THAT ACTUALLY MATTERS

Seven elected women on how to build a professional support system...because sometimes you just have to DIY it.

First, be willing to acknowledge that you need help, advises Phoenix Mayor **Kate Gallego**. "I tried to do everything myself, but I soon learned that people like to support women who don't pretend to be superhuman."

"Identify the advocacy groups that push for the same agenda as you do. Many have been operating for years before you got elected and have great tips on how the system really works," says Oklahoma Labor Commissioner **Leslie Osborn**.

Search for an adviser you can learn from, says Michigan State Senator **Dayna Polehanki**, who found hers on Facebook. "I messaged her and we met at a local Panera for 10 minutes. She's now my political mentor."

"Find *your* people," says **Lisa Blunt Rochester**, a U.S. Representative from Delaware. "I reengaged with a group I'd lost touch with, the Delaware chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. One organization led to another—and support across many networks."

Attend conferences and meetings with legislators from around the country, says North Carolina State Representative **Julie von Haefen**. "This has helped me create a network I can turn to when things get stressful."

Establish unlikely alliances by befriending colleagues who are of the opposite mindset as you, says **Jasmine Crockett**, a U.S. Representative from Texas. "There will come a time in which they prove invaluable."

Surround yourself with a team of people who know you and the unique challenges you face as a woman—and who will be honest with you, says Massachusetts Governor **Maura Healey**. "Also: Recharge. All the professional support in the world doesn't matter if you're not taking care of yourself."

Week Three on the Job

If you're a local politician, get in touch with the state and federal representatives who oversee your constituents, says Watertown, New York mayor Sarah Compo Pierce. Relay what your district needs and how you could work together.

GALLEGO: BILL MORÉE. ROCHESTER: COURTESY OF LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER. OSBORN: COURTESY OF LESLIE OSBORN. POLEHANKI: COURTESY OF DAYNA POLEHANKI.

48% of you feel like being one of the only women in the room is a barrier to success for women in office.

WHAT YOU, NONELECTED PERSON, CAN DO

Even the tiniest of efforts can make an impact.

GIVE MONEY

Compared with men, it's harder for women in office to raise funds, and donating to their efforts does more than just keep them afloat: "Raised funds can increase their retention rates, which in turn impacts their ability to acquire leadership positions and to support new candidates," says Debbie Walsh, director of CAWP. Visit WomenCount.org to get started.

GET INVOLVED

Elected women, especially those of color and/or in the LGBTQ+ community, "are often the 'first' or the 'only'—it's an incredibly isolating experience," says Nilofar Ganjaie, national political director at the Pipeline Fund, a network of organizations and strategists dedicated to getting diverse leaders elected. Follow and support groups like Local Progress (a movement of local elected officials who advocate for racial and economic justice), School Board Partners (a nonprofit that supports and trains school board members), and Vote Mama.

SHOW UP

Lending your IRL support at, say, local school board meetings or state legislature hearings can give elected women much-needed encouragement, says Denise Feriozzi, cofounder and executive director of the Pipeline Fund. Your virtual presence can be just as impactful because elected women are faced with significantly more online harassment than elected men. "If you see somebody being unfairly attacked, use your online platform to defend them," says Lauren Leader, cofounder and CEO of All In Together, a women's civic education organization. "On a tactical level, this stuff can be really powerful."

PITCH IN

Find out who your local officials are and offer to support them...as people. "Bring someone dinner so she doesn't have to worry about that, or offer childcare on the Tuesday nights her council meets," suggests Walsh. Adds Leader: "Every way in which you're able to step forward and ease the burden for someone that's working hard is valuable."

THINGS TO FIGHT FOR RIGHT NOW

Anyone and everyone should DM their national representatives and urge them to support these resolutions that *Cosmopolitan* believes could improve the political experience for elected women.

HOUSE RESOLUTION 220

Its endgame: to urge the government to adopt policies that promote women's political participation and reduce violence against women in politics.

HOUSE RESOLUTION 445

It calls for the Senate to ratify the United Nations' CEDAW treaty—the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

HOUSE RESOLUTION 543

It would let House members attend proceedings remotely and vote by proxy when they're dealing with a child's or their own serious medical condition, including any pregnancy-related one.

HOUSE RESOLUTION 967

Were this to pass, any House member who's recently given birth could designate a colleague to vote on their behalf for up to six weeks after having a baby.

Week Four on the Job

Get to know as many employees of your jurisdiction as you can, says Lexington, Kentucky mayor Linda Gorton. "Meet the people who write your grants or those in the police and fire departments. They want to know you care about what they do."

Halfway Through the Year

Host a town hall to hear from your community, says Washington State Senator Karen Keiser. "One of the best things you can do is engage with your constituents. Tell them you are listening and are responsive to their concerns."

VON HAEFEN: COURTESY OF JULIE VON HAEFEN. CROCKETT: COURTESY OF JASMINE CROCKETT. HEALEY: ALLISON MITCHELL.

The New (New)

COQUETTE

You know it. *Tarot* actor **Avantika** knows it. Having gotten a much-needed update, bows are absolutely inescapable right now. Here, we humbly suggest a few ways you can wear them without looking like everyone else.

FIRST, A HISTORY LESSON

The word "coquette" can come with a lot of connotations, some of them super dated. This delicate modern take is anything but. We're reclaiming the term *and* the sweet details associated with it: cute ruffles, pearls, and, yes, bows paired with workhorse staples like blouses and pencil skirts.

ShuShu/Tong top, sunglasses, and bag. The Frankie Shop long-sleeve shirt.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN LAMBERTY STYLING BY CASSIE ANDERSON WORDS BY RACHEL TORGERSON

APPLAUSE FOR THE ADD-ONS

A lacy lingerie moment isn't complete without killer accessories—hence these chic Mary Janes, a scrunchie-handle bag, this sheer stole, and (of course) the hair bows.

Sportmax top and skirt. Only Hearts bra. Fleur du Mal bodysuit. Jimmy Choo pumps. Jennifer Behr hair bows. Loeffler Randall bag.

TIME TO RETIRE

If those around you aren't quite sure whether you're heading to bed or going out for the night, you've really nailed this look. Extra points for finally living out your *Pride and Prejudice* fantasies.

Cecilie Bahnsen cardigan, bralette, overlay, and skirt. Le Monde Béryl Mary Janes. Jennifer Behr hair bow. Alex Monroe earrings. Buddha Mama necklace.

SEE THE LIGHT

Pastel colors like lilac, sky blue, and bubblegum pink are the moment. Although when in doubt, an all-white look also works well. Conversely, deeper colors give this trend a moody edge, which is a vibe in itself.

Cou Cou cardigan, tank, and skirt. Falke socks. Pandora Jewelry earrings and necklace. Vanessa Mooney ring. Hill House Home bed set.

FLOWER POWER

If coquette could wear one pattern for the rest of its life, it would be tiny florals, and we love that for it! Especially when mixed with knee-high socks, shoes with pearl accents, and a chunky locket.

ShuShu/Tong dress. Swedish Stockings socks. Manolo Blahnik pumps. Jennifer Behr hair bow. Alex Monroe earrings. Vanessa Mooney necklace. Almarow ring.

COMING UNDONE

I don't know who needs to hear this, but you don't have to do up a bow for its presence to be felt. Sometimes leaving one untied gives even more dainty charm. You're welcome.

Dôen cardigan. Only Hearts bra. Tae Park shorts. Falke socks. Manolo Blahnik pumps. Jennifer Behr hair bow. Saint Laurent glasses. Retrouvaí earrings. Buddha Mama necklace.

I HEART IT

A lot of the pieces that work best here could also be described as "looks like decor from your grandma's house," and isn't that delightfully comforting? I swear mine had a clone of this bag as a pillow in her living room. Love you, Grammy!

Adeam cardigan. Only Hearts bra. Ganni skirt. Rene Caovilla heels. Jennifer Behr headband. Swarovski ring. Serpenti Apparel bag. Ruggable rug.

SOFT LIFE

Of course, the most classic way to wear bows is to take the romantic level up to 11 with flounces galore. This diaphanous number makes me want to run through a field of wildflowers.

Adeam gloves. Pandora Jewelry earrings and necklace. Urbanwalls wallpaper.

Hair: Davey Matthew at The Only Agency using Covet & Mane extensions.
Makeup: Karina Milan at The Wall Group. Manicure: Elizabeth Garcia using Zillabeau.

FOR SHOPPING INFORMATION, GO TO COSMOPOLITAN.COM.

All Hail Avantika

It takes a certain kind of person to step into the iconic role of Karen from *Mean Girls* (made legendary by Amanda Seyfried) and make it their own. Like, there's a 30 percent chance ~~that it's already raining~~ of screwing it up. But Avantika makes it look easy (see for yourself on Paramount+). The 19-year-old Columbia University student got her start in India in Telugu-language movies before breaking into Hollywood—and she's about to be so famous that she's going by just one name these days. Watch her take on the horror genre in the new movie *Tarot*, which hits theaters May 3.

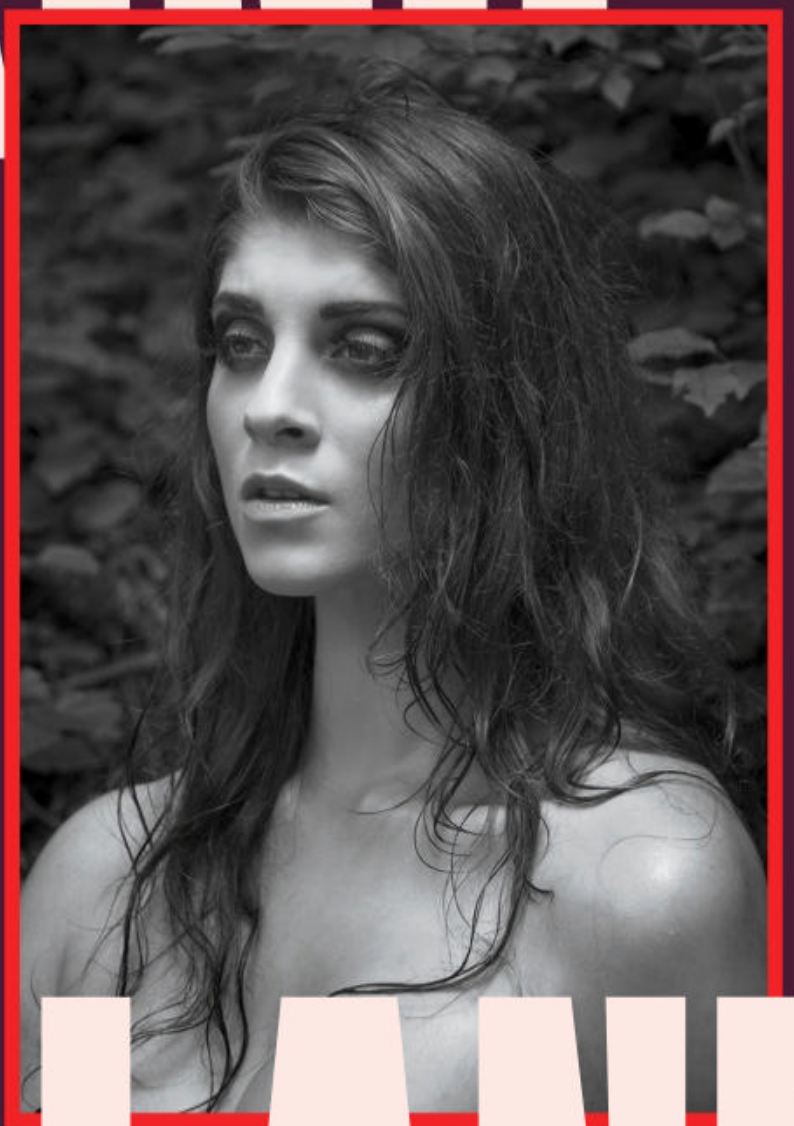
WE CAN KEEP IT CASUAL

Don't let anyone say you can't add a baseball cap because this outfit proves otherwise. The mix of a semiformal dress and shoes with the ultimate grocery-run accessory is basically perfect.

Carolina Herrera dress and belt. Falke socks. Malone Souliers pumps. Kule hat. Jennifer Behr hair bow. Heaven Mayhem earrings. NST Studio rings.

BY JESSICA KLEIN

LOOKING FOR TONI LANE



She was crypto's It Girl, the young woman onstage at the conferences hyping blockchain as a way to radically reshape an unjust world. The young woman at the industry parties schmoozing with wealthy venture capitalists to get them on board. The young woman at the spiritual retreats seeking endless ways to self-improve. People loved her. And then she disappeared. What happened to Toni Lane Casserly—and what does her tragic death reveal?

THE LIVESTREAM HAS BEGUN.

She sits in an off-white easy chair in a nondescript room. She's relaxed yet radiant, her dark eyes dancing with anticipation. Across from her, an interviewer, a seemingly affable dude in a graphic tee, grins and points. That's her cue. She flutters her fingers outward from her face. Her painted lips part. "I'll beeeee seeing youuuuu / In all the old familiar places...." Toni Lane Casserly, channeling Billie Holiday, sings the classic song a cappella with just about perfect pitch. The dude swoons.

You wouldn't know it from the cold open, but this is a conversation about the blockchain technology that fuels cryptocurrencies. About the new world order Toni is working to construct, an inverted model of society as we know it.

The date is December 7, 2018. Toni is 27 and industry-famous, at the top of her game. As one of the few women in crypto, she stands out, not just because of her gender but because of her style—free-flowing, jazzy—and her values. While many of her peers hole up in hacker houses and race to pump out "magic internet money," as one bluntly puts it, Toni worries over issues like state violence, mass dispossession, disaster-fueled climate migration, and the gatekeeping of wealth by the ruling class. *Let us not turn away*, she counsels. *Together we can fix this. We must.*

Part of the solution, she believes, are blockchains—permanent digital ledgers maintained by decentralized networks of computers. These data banks store documents and financial transactions; they keep score. And ultimately, Toni preaches, they will introduce a new kind of accountability, put control in the hands of the people, and shift the paradigms of global power.

Her passion is compelling, seductive even, and hits with a sense of authority. She's been in the blockchain field for half a decade, ever since she bailed on a communications program at the University of Texas, leaving behind her family and theater-kid roots for the burgeoning crypto scene of the Bay Area. Her first job, at a bitcoin tipping company later acquired by Airbnb, was just the start. A genius networker, she soon parlayed her prolific people skills into more impressive roles. In 2015, she was named CEO of *Cointelegraph*, a publication that chronicled crypto news and intrigue and connected her with its biggest players. She then homed in on consulting, making a name for herself as a marketing whisperer for companies like the stablecoin Tether.

Toni's big dream, though, is to launch a blockchain start-up of her own. She's written a pitch deck for one called Cultu.re, which would issue and track personal identity and ownership documents, like blockchain marriage certificates and property deeds. Users would no longer be reliant on corrupt governments or financial institutions for these things. Even more exciting, her ecosystem would assign each of its members a peer-to-peer social credit score of sorts—a trustworthiness metric that would band people together and "leverage good behavior to redistribute resources." In fiery talks at events, from the Japan Blockchain Conference in Tokyo to the Crypto Symposium in Mykonos, Toni positions Cultu.re as a means to "destroy the state." Via YouTube, her presentations reach tens of thousands around the world. Industry media hail her as a young star. She earns a nickname: the Joan of Arc of Blockchain.

Toni is relentless in her mission—until one day, she isn't. Not even a year from now, she will suddenly drop off the map, both metaphorically and literally. Her social media accounts will sit silent. Friends won't hear from or about her for six months, until the spring of 2020, when Toni's mother will find her body, malnourished and unresponsive, in her childhood bedroom.

Those who knew Toni, including the dozens of her friends, family members, and associates interviewed for this story, will be shattered and mystified by her death. How could this vibrant young woman, beloved and admired by so many, disappear?

In piecing together, for the first time, the major events of her final months, an answer arises. And it feels like a clarion call.

EV MARQUEE.

BOULDER CREEK, CALIFORNIA

DEC 2018

Hair tied back, Toni stooped to pull weeds among the majestic redwoods. She was helping tend the grounds at Genesis, a 40-acre property north of Santa Cruz that had, in the '70s and '80s, housed an alternative college, the University of the Trees.

Genesis was a special place for Toni—part time-share, part think tank, part hippie commune. Member-owners joined by buying blockchain tokens, which allowed them to stop in for consciousness building, nature vibes, and more. In charge of day-to-day operations were two of her friends: crypto trader Sean Ironstag and musician/DJ Geo Star, both Burning Man regulars perpetually dressed for the playa.

Toni's stake in Genesis was more ideological than financial. She wasn't a member, exactly; she was more of a chronic visitor who passionately identified with its purpose. Plus, living out of a suitcase was kind of her thing, says Ironstag. He'd met Toni in the primordial bitcoin sphere years earlier, when they bonded over a seething distrust of financial institutions. Ironstag, in fact, was a convicted felon, having served time for forgery. ("I found a way to really fuck the digital banking system," he says.) Toni didn't judge. At various gatherings, the two friends stayed up late, deep in conversation.

During this holiday stopover, though, things at Genesis had started to lose their luster. Toni learned her cherished sanctuary was in trouble: A third cofounder, who controlled the property, wanted the others out. Normally, Toni carried herself with an almost maternal confidence that made you believe good would always prevail. But this news seemed to activate a kind of protective rage. "She was really pissed," says Ironstag, from where he and Star sit poolside at the Palm Springs Ace Hotel years later.

Jaw set, Toni assured her friends this vital collective would not dissolve on her watch and vowed to give the cofounder "a harsh talking-to," Ironstag remembers.

That meeting with the cofounder tested the limits of Toni's persuasive power, in rare battle mode against someone else's business interests. "[He] is now reversing his agreed upon terms and saying he would not like to engage in a peaceful dialogue," she texted Ironstag. Within weeks, Genesis was no more.

"She was part of the inner circle of the industry. You weren't in the business if you weren't friends with Toni."

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

EARLY JAN 2019

An ocean breeze blew gently as Toni rang in the New Year, cocktail in hand, partying alongside her illustrious host, crypto baron Brock Pierce. Toni had a "permanent invite" to pretty much any event he threw. "She was part of the inner circle of the industry," says Pierce. "You weren't in the business if you weren't friends with Toni."

Toni built loyalty by going to bat for other people's ideas on the global stage. Thanks to her performance chops, she could crush a keynote—a gift that Pierce, a former teen movie actor, respected and leveraged. "Toni could explain a project's mission better than the founder or CEO," Pierce says. "She was a very good storyteller, very good at delivering the message. That skill set is rare."

In 2018, Toni traveled the world with Pierce, hyping his new blockchain token EOS (the effort raised some $4 billion in crowdfunding before running into trouble with government regulators, one of several legal situations Pierce has faced in his career). She also publicized Pierce's efforts to attract crypto investors to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria devastated the U.S. commonwealth, killing nearly 3,000 people there. The hope, she said, was that Silicon Valley transplants would introduce tech initiatives aimed at "empowering Puerto Ricans with the tools to solve their own problems."

Multiple insiders say the kind of work Toni did was rarely salaried. She likely received stipends in the form of highly volatile blockchain tokens. Allen Rowe, a mostly retired crypto investor who worked as Toni's virtual executive assistant in 2018, says speaking fees appeared to be her main source of income. She set her base rate at around $5,000 plus travel costs but often settled for less than half of that. "I don't think she ever felt she was paid fairly," says Rowe, who earned the equivalent of $2,500 a month in Bitcoin and Ethereum working for Toni. (A single Bitcoin valued at $3,800 at the beginning of 2019 would be worth more than $71,900 as of April 2024.)

Pierce himself certainly never had Toni on payroll, he says. "I think of her as someone that worked tirelessly on behalf of the industry and was balling on a budget."

Years later, as Pierce leaves a fancy dinner in San Juan, he's still thinking about Toni. He and his fellow VIP guests pile into Teslas and head to a party in a gated community, gliding past walls graffitied with "Gringo go home." It's clear Pierce and the other investors he and Toni once hoped to attract haven't delivered. What would Toni think if she could see this now?

"Some of the things she was working on still may get done," Pierce says. "Her ideas were not wrong, just a little too early. Toni was basically a woman living in the future."

EDEN, UTAH

MID JAN 2019

Seemingly energized by the promise of new opportunities in the year ahead, Toni made stops at two major events. First up: Peer Summit in Utah, an invitation-only ideas festival held at an eco-conscious ski resort called Powder Mountain. There, wealthy blockchain innovators would converge to shape the industry, which Toni hoped would soon include Cultu.re.

She soaked in the resort's communal hot tub surrounded by megamillionaires, despite the fact that she was often leery of powerful men. In past Facebook posts, she'd alluded to business meetings where prospective male investors had propositioned and even assaulted her. Never shy about denouncing the misogyny she'd encountered, she still did her best to focus on her mission. At Powder Mountain, that meant turning on the charm and riffing on her Cultu.re spiel for her audience. "Ninety percent of them could have personally financed the seed round of her start-up," says Ryan Singer, a friend of Toni's who was there.

They'd met in San Francisco around 2013, a duo of opposites—Singer, a soft-spoken tech nerd; Toni, a cosmic social star. Their relatively humble backgrounds united them, two millennials hustling to get by in an unaffordable city. By 2019, though, they were on different paths. Singer had held a number of leadership roles at start-ups and launched a few of his own, the latest being the blockchain company Chia Network. Unlike Toni, he had mastered the art of business combat.

Toni's approach was more fake-it-till-you-make-it, acting the part of a moneyed insider. She told some people her father was an oil magnate. In reality, he runs a pool company. "She put a lot of effort into talking in a posh way," Singer says. "She was very experimental with fashion—a lot of big fur coats and hats." He describes little tells in Toni's facade, like her unfamiliarity with country club leisure pursuits. When many Peer Summit attendees peeled off for a ski outing, Singer (who stayed behind) has no memory of Toni joining.

"Bad energies" were following her.

Toni's talents were of the raw, innate variety. At a dressy group dinner, Toni cued up the pianist and serenaded the crowd. "Everybody was entranced," Singer remembers. Yet not quite enough to win Cultu.re the backing she needed. Despite the advisers Toni had tapped to help sketch out the basics, her company's business plan (like many business plans) was vague and jargony, lacking the clear pathway to profitability that investors like to see. "Entrepreneurs need to be able to go back and forth between being idealistic and being able to do negotiations," says Singer. "Toni only ever did that first thing. I never saw her play hardball with anyone."

And after Utah, Singer would never see Toni again.

BOTTOM LEFT: EV MARQUEE.

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND

LATE JAN 2019

Wherever she showed up, Toni always brought a certain level of intensity—it's how she made soulmates out of acquaintances. "There was no small talk with her," says tech founder Lucian Tarnowski, a friend and frequent festival buddy. "It was all big, meaty concepts: systems change, societal design. We would have far-reaching conversations outside of the bounds of time."

When he crossed paths with her in the Swiss Alps at the World Economic Forum, though, Toni seemed consumed by anguished urgency. At an event that week, "she broke down weeping for the state of the world," Tarnowski says. "Bone-chilling weeping, like a mother who was losing a child."

He pulled her aside to talk. As much as he respected his friend's "superhuman powers to feel," this seemed like a spiritual crisis. Toni confided that she was in a dark place: "Bad energies" were following her, she said. And she still hadn't secured funding for her start-up.

"One of the things our society gets so wrong is that we don't have an effective way of rewarding the people who are at the front lines trying to find ways out of this giant mess we're in," says Tarnowski, who is descended from Polish aristocracy. "They tend to be almost martyrs. Where is the capital to fund those kinds of people?"

A deeper question Toni may have been confronting: Was capital even the answer?

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

FEB TO MARCH 2019

Between conferences, Toni holed up at a San Francisco share house known as the Crypto Castle, home to a motley crew of blockchain coders and entrepreneurs. Toni had lived there intermittently since 2015. Back then, the scene was more college dorm than coworking space. Cheez-Its and comically oversized bottles of champagne were among the main food groups.

The proprietor, a baby-faced blockchain mogul named Jeremy Gardner, was a trusted friend. He and Toni had met on a date in 2014, and while the romantic chemistry wasn't there, a potent rapport was. The timing was fortuitous: A few weeks after meeting Gardner, Toni got evicted from an apartment and asked to crash on his couch.

"My house for years became a home base for her whenever things went wrong," Gardner says. The relationship wasn't one-sided though. Having come up through the Occupy Wall Street movement, Gardner drew energy from Toni's fierce idealism, even as he counseled her to be more pragmatic about her own business plan. They could be real with each other. In social settings, she referred to him as her brother, which was kind of nice for an only child to hear.

Eventually, Gardner began to branch out from crypto, launching a skincare line and moving to Miami. And by spring 2019, the Crypto Castle had welcomed a new cohort of more subdued renters. Gardner was happy to have Toni squeeze in...at first, anyway. Tenants weren't thrilled by the stranger sleeping on the couch while they were trying to get serious work done. Gardner started getting complaints. And although Toni insisted she was paying him rent in Bitcoin, the funds never materialized.

Gardner never imagined his last correspondence with Toni would be about money, that she would just pack up her things and disappear. If he had been more aware of her precarious state, he would've taken a softer approach. "I just assumed she would show up at my door again one day," Gardner says. "That's what Toni did."

ISTANBUL, TÜRKIYE

APRIL TO MAY 2019

One morning, Toni opened the encrypted messaging app Telegram to an inquiry from a woman we'll call Narin. It was a simple note: Narin, a virtual reality influencer based in Türkiye, was looking to track down a writer from *Cointelegraph*. Could Toni put them in touch?

Toni wasn't acquainted with the writer, but she and Narin struck up a friendly text exchange. As women leaders in different tech spheres, they admired each other's expertise. Near-daily messages soon gave way to phone calls. Narin caught feelings and invited Toni to visit her in Istanbul. Narin would pay for everything, she assured Toni. A change of scenery didn't sound like a bad idea. Off Toni went.

Narin thought of Toni as "more than a friend." The two of them had fun together in Türkiye, sightseeing and souvenir shopping. She even introduced Toni to a photographer, who styled her in a personal portrait session.

For Toni, though, the trip wasn't only a lark. Narin says Toni attended at least one business meeting at an opulent 5-star hotel, where a potential client in the banking industry was apparently interested in hiring Toni to advise on a blockchain-related project. But Toni's excitement about the potential job, however lucrative it may have been, seemed out of character: Why would she consider a banking project when she had always railed against big banks? Wasn't she trying to launch a start-up that would radically redistribute wealth?

All Narin can say now is that something shifted after that meeting. Toni announced she was leaving Istanbul and heading to London. "I was crying," Narin remembers. In texts and calls from that point forward, Toni seemed cold and rude, like a completely different person. Another friend of Toni's who saw her in London says Toni spoke of "seeing spirits."

RENO, NEVADA

EARLY JULY 2019

She was alone and in crisis. Around 2:30 p.m. on July 6, a Nevada state trooper spotted a young woman walking north along a bleak stretch of US-395 just north of Reno. The temperature was a scorching 91 degrees. The woman, Toni, was dressed in black, trudging along in high-heeled boots. The trooper stopped and offered a ride, which Toni declined, according to police records. The trooper then ordered her to exit the highway a short distance up ahead and left her to it. Pedestrians weren't allowed out there.

Toni had traveled hundreds of miles from California in the days prior. On July 1, she'd left a now-defunct spiritual retreat center near Tahoe, where something had gone awry. ("Due to a serious misalignment of values, I am looking for a new place to live as of TODAY!" she wrote in a Facebook post.) She then showed up at a friend's Fourth of July party in San Francisco carrying her belongings in garbage bags, only to depart abruptly.

No one can explain how Toni ended up on that Nevada highway, where she walked for miles, at one point turning south. Another officer, responding to a dispatch call along with emergency medical responders, found her around 8:30 p.m. near the Reno-Tahoe International Airport. EMTs determined Toni's condition was stable. She wasn't dehydrated or suicidal (she wasn't carrying drugs or weapons either). The trooper gave her a ticket and pointed her toward an exit just south of where they stood. If he saw her here again, he warned, she'd be subject to arrest.

An hour and a half later, he circled back. Toni was still there, this time north of where he'd last seen her, claiming she couldn't find the exit. She was arrested, booked at the Washoe County jail on a misdemeanor charge, and then sent back out into the world.

EV MARQUEE.

No one can explain how Toni ended up on that Nevada highway.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

LATE JULY 2019

"I'm going to be in San Francisco—can I crash with you for a day or two?" Software engineer Austin Hyland was surprised when he got the text from Toni. They'd met at a blockchain conference in L.A. a couple of years prior, but they weren't super close. Just business associates, he says (at one point, they'd discussed Hyland working with Cultu.re). No matter though. He invited her over. Anything for a pal in need.

Toni arrived carrying just a few items of clothing, without cash or credit cards. And while in one sense this might seem normal for Toni—she was all about non-government-backed currency, after all—she also seemed weirdly withdrawn. She didn't want to talk about work or the state of the planet or much of anything at all. Had something happened?

Hyland, not knowing her very well, didn't want to pry. "I kind of just did my best to make sure she was safe and comfortable," he says. He tagged along as she roamed the city aimlessly, dressed in Hyland's sweats and hoodies. After 10 days, she took off without disclosing her next move.

LOCATION UNKNOWN

EARLY AUG 2019

Toni did seek support for mental health at various points in her life. Norwegian therapist Alanja Forsberg first encountered Toni as a client at a 2018 retreat in Boulder, Colorado. Forsberg's therapeutic approach is based on psychodrama, she explains, a group technique developed in the 1920s that incorporates elements of improvisational theater.

Toni was one of about 30 people at the retreat. She focused on unpacking sexual trauma in her past—experiences with perpetrators she chose not to report to authorities and sometimes declined to name even in private conversations. Among those suspected by friends was a prominent male figure in the crypto industry whom several other women, speaking on background, describe to *Cosmopolitan* as predatory and dangerous. "Most people don't want to feel their deepest pain," Forsberg says now via video call from Norway. "Toni went to the pain and she stood there; she fucking stayed in it." She and Toni kept in touch, with Forsberg serving as an informal adviser of sorts.

But now Toni was FaceTiming Forsberg from an unknown airport, her usual fearless demeanor gone. She was in heightened distress, eyes darting around wildly. "She was saying, 'They are coming after me. They are coming after me,'" Forsberg remembers. "I was like, 'What the fuck is going on? Who are they? Who?' I didn't understand if she was scared of physical people in this world or spirits in other realms."

The call ended without clear answers. Toni later resurfaced via text, seemingly in a calmer state. "I woke up this morning and wanted to fly to come to train with you. Would you be open to that?" she wrote. "I've been on a big journey in my healing work. My consciousness is growing."

Forsberg wasn't in a position to take on clients at the time. Her husband was sick; she was at capacity. Her eyes well up as she recounts this final exchange. Saying no to Toni would become "the sentence I've regretted most in my life."

THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS

AUG 2019 TO APRIL 2020

Somehow, Toni found her way back to her Texas hometown. That in itself was noteworthy. Toni had been out of touch for years. Her father, Nick Casserly, says he and Toni had been close before she went down the blockchain rabbit hole. He admits he wasn't supportive. In 2013, they'd fought over money and her lack of commitment to college. Once Toni left home, "she didn't remain in much contact," Nick says in an email. "She had many friends who were fiercely loyal to her."

A high school friend confirms this, describing Toni as "so funny and smart and interesting, you were completely drawn to her. You could tell that she needed to be even bigger, and you're like, *You don't need to be more. You're already amazing.*"

"She was a shell of her former self."

Ryan Lynch had a brief relationship with Toni in college and describes their connection as deeply spiritual. "I loved her with all my heart," he says. "She was very complicated and hard to keep up with." During their very first conversation in the University of Texas communications library, she engaged him for two hours on the topic of plant cultivation. Lynch, now a contractor, never stopped thinking or caring about Toni. In recent years, he's become close with her mom. (Toni's parents divorced when she was young, and her mother declined to comment for this story but did grant Lynch permission to share details of Toni's final days.)

By the time Toni's mother picked her up at the airport in August 2019, the only item in Toni's possession was a phone. "She was obviously traumatized," Nick says of his daughter's emotional state, "a shell of her former self." Toni didn't want to see any doctors or leave her mom's house. She spent her days snuggling with her mom's dog, Boomer, strenuously avoiding her phone and other screens.

Toni left town again only once, in November 2019, for a high-profile speaking engagement at the Doha Debates in Paris. There, Toni would face off with a panel of other thought leaders on the question "Can we thrive without trust in government?" The debate should have been a slam dunk for Toni. But video of a one-on-one interview before the main event shows her on the defensive as the interviewer challenges her belief in blockchain technology as a replacement for nation-states.

"Do you vote?" the interviewer asks with a cool smile.

"I don't engage in the current institutional political realm in any means," Toni says. She's pale; she looks tired.

The interviewer expresses smug surprise. "Wow, so you actively try not to participate in what arguably is your civic duty?"

Toni blinks, then responds. "I would say that my civic duty is that I take care of my neighbors when they get sick."

Toni lived on in his dreams, lucid visions that startled him awake.

THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS

APRIL 14, 2020

Toni's mom entered her daughter's bedroom that morning to check on her. Toni hadn't been well—fighting an infection of some kind, running a fever. For the entire month prior, she'd eaten almost nothing and continued to refuse medical care. Now, it was too late: Toni's mother found her daughter in bed, dressed in plaid pajamas, unresponsive.

Nick Casserly announced Toni's passing on Facebook soon after. Her far-flung crypto network responded with shocked confusion, swirling with conspiracy theories—that Toni had been murdered or brainwashed by a spiritual cult. Losing their beautiful, vibrant friend felt unimaginable. But the coroner's report was definitive: Toni's official cause of death was anorexia nervosa.

Anorexia has one of the highest mortality rates of all mental illnesses, says Allegra Broft, MD, an eating disorder specialist at NY-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City. While some people live for years with the condition, anorexia can lead to sudden death through medical complications such as cardiac arrest. Research shows that a large measure of people with eating disorders also meet the criteria for at least one other psychiatric disorder, such as depression, bipolar disorder, or PTSD. These co-occurring conditions can fuel one another, and successful treatment often requires a multidisciplinary care team. In cases when an adult declines professional support, "family members are often very helpless," says Dr. Broft. She likens the experience to loving someone with a substance-use disorder. "There's only so much you can do to intervene."

Now, of course, everyone in Toni's life wishes they had done more. The troubling signs were there. The subtle cries for help. The not-so-subtle ones too.

It was easy, maybe, to fault her decentralized lifestyle—no one was privy to the full scope of her life or inner world. "Everyone felt a tremendous amount of guilt," says Gardner. "We can all blame ourselves a little for not being more proactive, for not reaching out to her or checking in on her." And because she died early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, even Toni's funeral was a shadow of what she deserved: a virtual memorial service over Zoom, where at least 20 people eulogized or made music in Toni's memory. Lynch briefly tuned in from Texas. "I watched for a couple minutes but just couldn't handle it," he says. "Closed my laptop and just tried to bury it." This proved impossible. Toni lived on in his dreams, lucid visions that startled him awake.

Which was actually on-brand for Toni: "My real thesis on death is that we don't actually die," she mused in her public talks. "Your soul is potentially made up of every other soul that exists on Earth because every time someone touches you, they leave an imprint."

Her own imprint is a cautionary parable, warning about the pressures we face to monetize our humanity, and a searing truth: Revolutionary hope will never fit into a neat business model with a bottom line.

Toni Lane Casserly died building a network. What she needed was community.

If you are struggling with disordered eating, consider reaching out to the **National Association of Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders** helpline at **888-375-7767**

TOP LEFT: EV MARQUEE.

JESSICA KLEIN is a freelance journalist whose work on cryptocurrency, intimate partner violence, and curious subcultures has appeared in publications including the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Elle*, *GQ*, *Fortune*, and *The Guardian*. As a contributing reporter at The Fuller Project, she received the 2021 NAJA National Native Media Award for Best Coverage of Native America.

cosmo's holy grail beauty awards

Dive into the year's best makeup, skincare, haircare, and more, as determined by our team of extremely picky experts.

BY BETH GILLETTE AND DEANNA PAI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIANNE WILLS
STYLING BY ANDREA ZENDEJAS

HOLY GRAIL
COSMOPOLITAN
2024
BEAUTY AWARDS

Jenny Bird earrings. Jade Swim one-pieces.

makeup

+ tools

+ nails

Dream and Gleam

Not feeling full-on eyeshadow? Give your lids a subtle glow with a swipe of a sheer, creamy bronzer like Glossier's. You'll get just enough sheen to catch the light—no blending needed.

Agmes earrings. Jenny Bird rings.

BEST BRONZER
"This cream is beginner-friendly, applies seamlessly, and leaves me with a sun-kissed 'I just got back from vacation yesterday' look."
—DAISY MALDONADO, ASSOCIATE SHOPPING EDITOR

Glossier Cloud Paint Bronzer, $22, sephora.com

As always, SPF is your main summer staple.

BEST NEW MAKEUP BRAND
"Ciele reimagines basics by loading them with broad-spectrum SPF. Its products are clean and acne-safe with red-carpet-level performance."
—BETH GILLETTE, BEAUTY EDITOR

Ciele Tint and Protect SPF 50+, $44, sephora.com

BEST CONCEALER
"The lightweight formula hides dark circles, discoloration, and even monster zits—and keeps them hidden for up to 16 hours."
—LAUREN BALSAMO, DEPUTY BEAUTY DIRECTOR

Laura Mercier Real Flawless Weightless Perfecting Concealer, $33, sephora.com

BEST DEWY FOUNDATION
"A moisturizing serum + MAC-level coverage = this buildable formula, which is loaded with hyaluronic acid to give skin a glow."
—BG

MAC Cosmetics Studio Radiance Serum-Powered Foundation, $46, ulta.com

BEST WATERPROOF MASCARA
"Thick, long lashes that withstood a sweaty workout class? Yep, it happened. This is my new go-to when I need a formula that lasts."
—BG

YSL Beauty Lash Clash Extreme Volume Waterproof Mascara, $32, sephora.com

BEST CREAM EYESHADOW
"Need a creamy shadow that's buildable and bold? These are all that and more, thanks to vitamin E and shea butter."
—JULEE WILSON, BEAUTY EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Ami Colé Lid Joy Liquid Matte Eyeshadow, $16, sephora.com

Add a gloss to this stain for shiny Popsicle lips.

BEST LIP STAIN
"I ate an entire apple with this lip stain on—mouth to peel, I promise—and the color remained completely intact. I'm still shook."
—CHRISTEN A. JOHNSON, LIFESTYLE EDITOR

CoverGirl Outlast Lipstain, $12, ulta.com

BEST BROW GEL
"Once I brush this through my brows, they straight-up do not budge. True story: I swiped this on at 9 a.m. and my brows were still pristine at 10 p.m."
—BG

Anastasia Beverly Hills Brow Freeze Gel, $26, sephora.com

Honestly, it's worth it for the face massage alone.

BEST FACIAL DEVICE
"This seriously delivered the 'glass skin' look. I used it with my favorite hydrating serum, and after five minutes, my complexion was glowing."
—JASMINE HYMAN, ASSISTANT SHOPPING EDITOR

Medicube Age-R Booster H, $299, amazon.com

BEST HAIR DRYER
"I've been a beauty editor for a long time and never used a dryer so versatile. It's a one-stop tool for all your needs, with two versions for different hair textures."
—JW

Shark SpeedStyle, $200, amazon.com

BEST PRESS-ON NAILS
"Instant manis are super smart and more stylish than ever. These bbs offer up bold solid hues, glittery French tips, delicate studded tips, and more."
—JW

Paintbox Press Ons, from $24, paint-box.com

BEST FAST-DRY NAIL POLISH
"A polish that is good for nails, lasts weeks (as part of a four-step system), can be taken off with regular remover, and dries super quickly? Right here, friends."
—SIENA GAGLIANO, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Dazzle Dry Nail Lacquer, $22, amazon.com

Your skin barrier will <3 these ceramides.

BEST SKINCARE STEAL
"How is this moisturizer—filled with nourishing ceramides and softening shea butter—cheaper than a cocktail? I don't know, but I'm into it."
—BG

The Inkey List Bio-Active Ceramide Repairing and Plumping Moisturizer, $20, sephora.com

BEST GEL FACE WASH
"Not only does this cleanser smell great, it *actually* does what it says: easily remove oils and makeup without stripping skin."
—MADDIE HIATT, SENIOR SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Naturium Vitamin C Complex Cleanser, $19, target.com

BEST HYDRATING SERUM
"This squalane-based serum is moisturizing, gentle, and worth the hype. It's almost confusing how light yet effective it is."
—TARAH-LYNN SAINT-ELIEN, FASHION EDITOR

Bubble Skincare Water Slide Hydration Boosting Serum, $17, ulta.com

BEST FACE MASK
"Packed with skin-loving emollients, this hydrating mask left me with softer, brighter skin after one use. Plus, the clay formula feels so luxe!"
—CORINNE SULLIVAN, EDITOR

Shani Darden Skin Care Signature Nourishing Facial Mask, $58, sephora.com

BEST RETINOL
"I swipe on one of these pads every other night for brighter, clearer skin without any dosage guess-work. The formula pairs 0.2 percent retinol with two retinol alternatives." **—BG**

Dr. Dennis Gross Advanced Retinol + Ferulic Perfectly Dosed Retinol (Universal 0.2%), $42 for 8, sephora.com

If you have reactive skin, alternate days to start.

BEST EYE CREAM FOR FINE LINES
"Gentle enough to use on delicate eye skin but strong enough to combat dryness and wrinkles, this cream gives my tired under-eyes a nice plump look." **—KRISTIN GIAMETTA, VISUAL DIRECTOR**

Murad Retinal ReSculpt Eye Treatment, $92, sephora.com

BEST MINERAL SPF FOR BODY
"This disappears on all skin tones, blends in like a dream, and leaves the most gorgeous natural, nonsticky glow."
—SG

Kinlò Always Golden Body Lotion SPF 30, $12 for 4 oz., thirteenlune.com

BEST DEODORANT
"After lots of sniffing my own armpits while testing, I can confidently say this lasts all day—zero BO, just a subtle peachy scent at the end of the day."
—ERIKA W. SMITH, SENIOR ASTROLOGY EDITOR

Secret Whole Body Deodorant Stick in Peach and Vanilla Blossom, $13, walmart.com

Bonus: It looks so chic hanging in the shower.

BEST RAZOR
"This five-blade razor makes for a super-smooth shave. It literally removed all of my hair in one pass without irritating my sensitive legs."
—EMILY ADAR, SENIOR VISUAL EDITOR

Gillette Venus Deluxe Smooth Sensitive Razor, $15 for 2, target.com

BEST BODY WASH
"You're definitely going to fall hard for the rose and cherry scent of this vitamin-B3-enhanced wash, but it's especially wild how soft your skin feels after you rinse."
—JW

Olay Indulgent Moisture Body Wash in Rose and Cherry Crème, $13, target.com

BEST BODY LOTION
"Vaseline doesn't miss. This fast-absorbing lotion left my skin glistening without any stickiness or icky residue. Plus, its delicate scent is delightful."
—CAJ

Vaseline Radiant X Even Tone Body Lotion, $14, amazon.com

BEST BODYCARE SPLURGE
"This is the first body oil I've used that doesn't leave a greasy, tacky film behind. It gives a glow without a mess."
—MALLORY ROYNON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Augustinus Bader The Geranium Rose Body Oil, $110, nordstrom.com

skin

+ body

Fading Out

If you're dealing with dark spots or discoloration, we've got you: A retinol-based product, like Dr. Dennis Gross's pads or Murad's eye cream, can help even out skin tone. Just remember to use SPF during the day so the sun's rays don't undo all your progress.

Mussels and Muscles earrings. Jade Swim one-piece.

hair + scents

HEY, WAIT!
We have so many more winners online. Scan here to shop them all:

Wet It and Forget It

Don't let flyaways distract from your slicked-back updo. Work a dab of a moisturizing product, like Ceremonia's hydrating mask, through damp hair—the oils will deliver a sheen and help keep frizz from forming.

Alexis Bittar earrings.
Hair: Izumi Sato at 87 Artists using Bumble + Bumble. Makeup: Tiffany Leigh Patton at Paradis NYC. Manicure: Mamie Onishi at See Management using The GelBottle.

BEST ROOT LIFTER
"While my fine hair is damp, I spritz this volumizing spray section by section to bulk it up and make it touchable and soft—without any crunch, of course."
—BG

Nexxus Unbreakable Care Root Lift Thickening Spray, $18, ulta.com

Use her in the a.m. to absorb sweat all day.

BEST DRY SHAMPOO
"This blended so easily into my black hair that I could barely believe it. Plus, you can use it multiple days in a row without getting gritty product buildup."
—OLIVIA TRUFFAUT-WONG, EDITOR

Batiste Sweat-Activated Dry Shampoo, $14, ulta.com

BEST HYDRATING HAIR MASK
"I've been loving this mask—you only leave it in for 5 to 10 minutes, then you rinse and...boom: sleek and shiny hair until the next wash day."
—MH

Ceremonia Mascarilla de Guava, $34, sephora.com

BEST PRODUCT FOR FLYAWAYS
"This wand has truly become my bestie. It takes care of all my flyaways and baby hairs in a matter of seconds."
—JOANNA MARQUINA, SOCIAL MEDIA AND GROWTH EDITOR

Garnier Fructis Sleek and Shine Frizz Tamer, $10, amazon.com

BEST VOLUMIZING SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER
"After having a baby last year, my already fine hair thinned so much—but using this duo makes me feel like it's doubled in volume." **—KG**

John Frieda UltraFiller+ Thickening Shampoo and Conditioner, $11 each, target.com

BEST SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER FOR CURLY HAIR
"Rocking my natural curls isn't an everyday affair, but this is like a magic potion for shine and frizz control."
—MARISA PETRARCA, CONTRIBUTING BEAUTY EDITOR

Pantene Pro-V Miracles Curl Define & Shine Shampoo and Conditioner, $10 each, target.com

BEST SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER FOR COLOR-TREATED HAIR
"This gave my hair a really nice shiny gloss and popped my hair color between salon visits. And it feels hydrating, not heavy."
—MR

Redken Acidic Color Gloss Sulfate-Free Shampoo and Conditioner, $33 each for 10.1 oz., ulta.com

BEST WAVE SPRAY
"It eliminates all the static and flyaways that come with my wavy hair while giving strands more shape without the crispy texture."
—MEGAN UY, ASSOCIATE SHOPPING EDITOR

Curlsmith Effortless Waves, $28, ulta.com

BEST FRUITY FRAGRANCE
"This perfume made me feel like *that* girl! Its fruity-floral scent gives it an elegant feel, while its citrus notes make it wearable every day."
—JM

Versace Dylan Purple Eau de Parfum, $105 for 1.7 oz., sephora.com

BEST HALL OF FAME FRAGRANCE
"One whiff of this floral scent reminds me of why it's so iconic. The mix of violet, wild berries, and jasmine means it's perfect for any occasion."
—JW

Marc Jacobs Daisy Eau de Toilette, $101 for 1.7 oz., sephora.com

Spritz these scents on clothes for longevity.

BEST CELEBRITY FRAGRANCE
"Victoria Beckham must have been a perfumer in a past life. Portofino '97 is the ideal fresh yet spicy take on a summertime perfume."
—BG

Victoria Beckham Portofino '97 Eau de Parfum, $200 for 1.7 oz., violetgrey.com

BEST HAIR PERFUME
"This brings my unwashed hair back to life with its luxurious scent and moisturizing properties. I'm obsessed with all the scents in the collection, but cardamom is my favorite."
—MU

Balmain Hair Perfume Cardamom 1974, $177, net-a-porter.com

FOR SHOPPING INFORMATION, GO TO COSMOPOLITAN.COM.

Sexy Fiction

Summer's Steamiest Beach Read

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SOFIE BIRKIN

Rue

After practically inventing the whole women-in-STEM-in-romance thing, best-selling author **Ali Hazelwood** (who also casually has a PhD in neuroscience) is back with *Not in Love*, a hot-as-hell workplace drama about biotech engineer Rue Siebert and finance guy Eli Killgore and their...well, read for yourself, in this exclusive adaptation of the first two chapters.

Ladies, this is a genuine, non-rhetorical question: How do the two of you survive in the real world?"

I stared at Nyota's contemptuous expression, reflecting on the unique brand of humiliation that came with having one's best friend's little sister (who'd been repeatedly rebuffed when attempting to enter the backyard tree house; who'd publicly feasted on a booger at Christmas 2009; who'd been caught French-kissing a clementine in the linen closet a few short months later) question one's ability to carry out a productive existence.

Then again, back in the day, Tisha and I had been three whole years older than her, and we'd harbored a clearly misplaced superiority complex. We knew better now that little Nyota was twenty-four, a law school prodigy, and a newly minted bankruptcy lawyer whose billable hours were worth more than my tragically high car insurance premium. To add insult to injury, I followed her on Instagram, which was how I knew she could bench-press more than her weight, looked incredible in a monokini, and regularly baked onion rosemary focaccia from scratch.

In a powerful flex whose brilliance kept me awake at night, Nyota had never followed me back.

"You know us," I said, choosing honesty over pride. Tisha and I were holed up inside my closet-sized office at Kline, FaceTiming someone who'd probably never even saved our phone numbers.

Dignity was the least of our worries. "We are barely hanging on."

"Can you just answer the question?" Tisha bristled. As humbling as this was for me, it had to be much worse for her. Nyota was *her* sister, after all.

"Really? You call me in the middle of the workday to ask what a *loan assignment* is? You couldn't google it?"

"We did," I said, omitting that we'd added *for dummies* to the search. And yet. "We got the gist of it, we think."

"Great, then you're golden. I'm hanging up, see you both at Thanksgiving—"

"However," I interrupted. It was late May. "The reactions of other Kline employees seem to suggest that we might not be fully grasping the implications of this *loan assignment*." My threshold for odd was high, and I'd been able to brush off the HR rep brazenly browsing monster.com at his standing desk, the chemists who'd bumped into me face-first and run away with nary an oops, the vacant stare of my usually dictatorial boss, Matt, when I'd informed him that the report he was waiting on would take at least three more hours. Then, while I

was emptying my water bottle into a potted plant that had lived in the break room longer than I'd been in the workforce, a technician had burst into tears and suggested, *You should take Christofern home, Dr. Siebert. It shouldn't die just because of what's about to happen to Kline*.

"OH MY GOD, HOW HAVE WE NOT TALKED ABOUT *THE GUY*."

I had *no clue* what was going on. All I knew was that I loved my current job at Kline, the most important project of my life was at a pivotal point, and I was too socially challenged to easily transition to another workplace. Today's event did not bode well. "There's going to be an assembly in fifteen minutes," I explained, "and we'd love to walk in with a better idea of what—"

"Ny, stop bitching and just regurgitate it for us like we're five," Tisha ordered.

"You guys are *doctors*," Nyota pointed out—*not* as a compliment.

"Okay, listen carefully, Ny, 'cause this will blow your mind and we might have to report it to the UN and have a trial at The Hague: the topic of private equity firms and loan assignments did *not* come up in *any* class during our chemical engineering PhDs. A *shocking* oversight, I know, and I'm sure NATO will want to take military action—"

"Zip it, Tish. You don't get to snark when *you* need something from *me*. Rue, how did you find out about the loan assignment?"

"Florence sent out a company-wide email," I said. "This morning."

"Florence is Kline's CEO?"

"Yes." It seemed reductive, so I added, "And founder." Still not exhaustive, but there was a time and place for fangirling, and this wasn't it.

"Did it say anything about which private equity bought your loan?"

I skimmed the body of the email. "The Harkness Group."

"Hmm. Rings a bell." Nyota typed away in silence, the New York City skyline gleaming behind her. Her office was in a high-rise—thousands of miles and an entire universe from North Austin. Like Tisha and me, she'd been eager to get out of Texas. Unlike us, she'd never moved back. "Ah, yeah. *Those* guys," she said eventually, squinting at her computer screen.

"Do you know them?" Tisha asked. "Are they, like, famous?"

"It's a private equity firm, not a K-pop band. But they *are* well known in tech circles." She bit her lip. Suddenly her expression was the opposite of reassuring, and I felt Tisha tense beside me.

"This is not the first time something like this has happened," I said, refusing to give in to panic. I had graduated from UT Austin a year earlier, but I'd been working for Florence Kline since before finishing my PhD. None of this felt new. "There are management shake-ups and investor issues all the time. It always settles down."

"Not sure about this time, Rue." Nyota's brow creased into a scowl. "Listen, Harkness is a private equity firm."

"Still don't know what that means," Tisha bristled.

"*As I was going to explain*, private equities are...groups of people with lots and lots of money and spare time. And instead of frolicking in their hard-earned cash Scrooge McDuck–style, or leaving it in savings accounts like the two of you—"

"Bold of you to assume I have savings," Tisha muttered.

"—they use it to buy other companies."

"And they bought Kline?" I asked.

"Nope. Kline hasn't gone public—you can't buy Kline's stocks. But back when it was founded, it needed money to develop... ravioli? Is that what you guys do?"

"Food nanotechnology."

"Sure. Let's pretend that means something. Anyway, when Florence founded Kline, she got a big loan. But now, whoever gave her the money decided to sell that loan to Harkness."

"Which means that now Kline owes the money to Harkness?"

"Correct. See, Rue, I knew you weren't *totally* useless. My sister, on the other hand, never ceases to..." Nyota's voice drifted as she frowned at her computer.

"What?" Tisha asked, alarmed. Nyota wasn't the type to stop mid-insult. "What happened?"

"Nothing. I'm just reading up on Harkness. They're well respected. Focused on midsize tech startups. I think they have a couple of science guys on the inside? They acquire promising companies, provide capital and support to grow them, sell them for a profit. Buying a loan seems a little out of their MO."

Tisha's fingers closed around my thigh, and I covered her hand with my palm. Physical comfort was rarely in my repertoire, but making exceptions for Tisha was no trouble. "So all Florence needs to do is pay back the loan to Harkness, and Harkness will be out of the picture?" I asked. Seemed simple enough. No need to involve monster.com.

"Uh...in the rainbow world you live in, maybe. Have fun frolicking with the unicorns, Rue. There's no way Florence has the money."

Tisha's grip tightened. "Ny, what does it mean, in practice? Does it mean that they take control of the company?"

"Maybe. It'll depend on the loan contract."

I shook my head. "Florence would never let them do that."

"Florence might not have a choice." Nyota's voice softened abruptly, and that—out of everything, *that* made the first tinges of fear hook into my stomach. "Depending on the terms of the agreement, Harkness might have the right to install a new CTO and seriously interfere in day-to-day operations."

Asking what a CTO was wasn't going to get me any closer to an Instagram follow, so I just said, "Okay. What's the bottom line?"

"Harkness might end up being a nonissue. Or it might be the reason you need to find new jobs. Right now, it's impossible to tell."

Tisha's "fuck" was a soft muttering. *Florence*, I thought, and my mouth felt dry. *Where is Florence right now? How is Florence right now?* "Thank you, Nyota," I said. "This was very helpful."

"Call me after today's assembly—we'll have a better idea by then." It was nice of her, that *we*. "But it wouldn't hurt to start sprucing up your CV, just in case. Austin is a great place for tech startups. Look around online, ask your nerd friends if they have leads. Do you guys have any friends, aside from each other?"

"I have Bruce."

"Bruce is a *cat*, Tish."

"And your point?"

They started bickering, and I tuned them out, trying to calculate the likelihood of Tisha and me finding another job together. One that would pay well and afford us the scientific freedom we currently had. Florence had even allowed me to—

A horrifying thought stabbed at me. "What about our personal projects? Employees' patents?"

"Mm?" Nyota cocked her head. "Employees' patents? For what?"

"In my case, a bio-nanocomposite that—"

"Uh-huh, hold the TED Talk."

"It's something that makes produce stay fresher. Longer."

"Ah. I see." She nodded in understanding, her eyes suddenly warmer, and I wondered what she knew. Tisha would never mention my history, but Nyota was observant and could very well have noticed on her own. After all, for years I'd spent every spare moment at their house, just to avoid returning to my own. "This is *your* project? *Your* patent? And you have an agreement that guarantees *you* ownership of this tech?"

"I'D PROBABLY CHOOSE ORGASMS FOR YOU. I'M A GENEROUS SOUL LIKE THAT."

"Yes. But if Kline changes hands—"

"As long as the agreement is in writing, you're good."

I remembered an email from Florence. Long words, small fonts, electronic signatures. Relief punched through me. *Thank you, Florence.*

"Guys, try not to sweat this too much, okay? Go to the assembly you're probably already late for. Find out all you can and report back. And for the love of Justice Brown Jackson, update your damn CVs. You haven't been a pet groomer since undergrad, Tish."

"Get off my LinkedIn," Tisha muttered, but she was flipping off an already blank screen. So she leaned back in her chair and settled for another subdued "fuck."

I stared ahead and nodded. "Indeed."

"Neither of us has the emotional constitution for job insecurity."

"Nope."

"I mean, we'll be all right. We're in tech. It's just..."

I nodded once more. We were happy at Kline. Together. With Florence.

Florence. "Last night, Florence texted me," I told Tisha. "Asked if I wanted to go over to her place."

She turned. "Did she say why?"

I shook my head, feeling half-embarrassed, half-guilty. *Way to show up for your friends, Rue.* "I told her I had plans."

"What were you—oh, right. Your quarterly sex-up. Rue After Dark. Oh my god, how have we not talked about *the guy*."

"What guy?"

"Really? You send me a picture of some dude's driver's license and then ask *what guy*? Nice try."

"It was a valiant attempt." I stood, trying to avoid remembering deep-set blue eyes. That Grecian urn profile that had forced me to stare. The short brown curls, just this side of too messy. He'd kept his eyes straight ahead as he drove me home, as if adamant not to look in my direction.

"Have you heard from him? Assuming you did the unthinkable and"—she gasped, clutching her sternum—"gave him your *number*."

"I haven't checked my phone." It now lived at the very bottom of my backpack, pressed under an extra hoodie, and my water bottle, and a stack of books that were due back at the library in two days. It was going to stay there, at least as long as I caught myself wondering every ten minutes whether he had texted.

I liked to force myself to keep a certain detachment when it came to *he*s.

THE APP THEY WERE USING WASN'T FOR DATING, NOT BY ANY CORRECT MEANING OF THE WORD.

"I should have gone to Florence's," I said, remorse prickling at the bottom of my stomach.

"Nah. Having to choose between you getting laid and having a heads-up on this here clusterfuck, I'd probably choose orgasms for you. I'm a generous soul like that." Tisha lowered her voice as we walked side by side, treading down Kline's sea-blue, ultramodern hallways that teemed with employees, all heading toward the open space on the first floor. They all smiled at Tisha—and nodded at me, polite but much more somber.

Kline had started out as a small tech startup, then quickly ballooned to several hundred employees, and I'd stopped keeping track of new hires. Plus, the solitary nature of my project made me a bit of an unknown quantity. The tall, serious, distant girl—who always hung out with the *other* tall girl, the funny and delightful one everybody loved. At Kline, Tisha's and my popularity levels were as mismatched as they'd been since elementary school. Luckily, I'd learned not to mind.

"Sadly," I murmured, "no orgasms were had."

"*What*? He did *not* look like he'd be bad at sex!"

"I wouldn't know."

She scowled. "Isn't that what you met him for?"

"Originally."

"And?"

"I don't know," I whispered, as Tisha and I took a seat on a couch at the back of the room. "I think that—"

"Never a dull fucking moment," said a musical voice, and the cushion dipped on my left side. Jay was our favorite lab technician. Or, more accurately, Tisha's favorite, whom she'd swiftly befriended. By virtue of always being around her, I'd been folded into that relationship. It was the unabridged story of my social life. "I swear to god," he said, "if they fire all of us and my visa falls through and I have to go back to Portugal and Sana breaks up with me—"

"Love the optimism, babe." From the other side of me, Tisha leaned forward with a grin. "We researched this whole mess, by the way. We can tell you what a loan assignment is."

Jay's eyebrow arched, and the piercings speared through it flickered. "You didn't know *before*?"

Tisha shrank back, disappearing behind me. "There, there." I patted her leg comfortingly. "At least we've never pretended to be anything but what we are."

A waterfall of red curls appeared in the crowd, and the knot of panic in my chest instantly loosened. Florence. Brilliant, resourceful *Florence*. She *was* Kline. She'd fought tooth and nail for it and wasn't going to allow anyone to take it from her. Certainly not some—

"Who are those four?" Tisha whispered in the sudden hush of the room. Her gaze had drifted past Florence, to the figures standing beside her.

"Someone from Harkness?" Jay guessed.

I had expected slicked-back hair, and suits, and that uniquely off-putting finance bro flair. The Harkness people, however, looked like they might have belonged at Kline in a different timeline. Maybe dressing down was just a power move on their part, but they seemed...normal. Approachable. The long-haired woman was at ease in her jeans and seemed pleased with the turnout, and so did the broad-shouldered man who stood just a little too close to her. The tall figure in the well-groomed beard surveyed the room a touch haughtily, but who was *I* to judge? I'd been told several times I didn't exactly inspire fuzzy warmth. And the fourth man, the one who joined the group last, gait unhurried and smile confident, he seemed...

The blood congealed in my veins.

"I already hate them," Jay mumbled, making Tisha laugh.

"You hate *everybody*."

"No, I don't."

"Yes, you do. Doesn't he, Rue?"

I nodded absently, eyes stuck on the fourth Harkness man like a bird caught in an oil spill. My head spun and the room ran out of air, because unlike the others', his face was familiar.

Unlike the others, I knew exactly who he was.

Eli — *The previous night...*

She looked even more beautiful than in her picture.

And she'd looked pretty fucking stunning in that, too, standing in front of a painfully familiar UT Austin sign. Not a selfie—a regular old-school photo, cropped to cut out her companion. All that was left was a slender, dark-skinned arm slung lazily around a shoulder. And, of course, *her*.

Smiling, but only faintly. There, but remote.

Beautiful.

Not that it mattered much. Eli had hooked up with enough people to know that a person's looks had a little less impact on the quality of casual sex than what that person was looking for. Still, when he arrived at the hotel lobby and spotted her at the bar, sitting straight on the tall stool, he stopped in his tracks. Hesitated, even though his meeting with Hark and the others had run behind, and dropping home to check on Tiny had put him a few minutes late.

She was drinking Sanpellegrino—a relief, since given their plans for the night, anything else would have given him pause. Her jeans and sweater were simple, and her posture was a thing of beauty. Relaxed, yet regal. Spine unbent, but not on edge. She didn't look nervous, and had the easy air of someone who did this often enough to know exactly what to expect.

Eli remembered her pertinent questions and straight-to-the-point answers. She'd messaged him the day before, with no emojis. No LOL or LMAO. Correctly placed punctuation and proper capitalization. He'd guessed it was a localized quirk, but her demeanor seemed like the embodiment of her writing.

Serious. A little impenetrable. Complicated.

And Eli had never been a fan of easy.

When he'd asked, *Where would you like to meet*? her response had been,

Not my apartment.

My place doesn't work either. I can book a hotel and cover the cost.

I'm okay with splitting.

No need.

Works for me, then. FYI, I'll share my location with a friend who has my login info to the app.

Please do. Would you like my phone number?

We can keep messaging here.

Sounds good.

Whatever made her feel safest. The dating app game could be dangerous. Then again, the app they were using wasn't for dating, not by any correct meaning of the word.

Eli glanced at the woman one last time, and something resembling the anticipation he used to be capable of rose inside him. He had no idea whether this woman was objectively, *scientifically* beautiful, or whether her face simply came together in a way that seemed to work perfectly for him. Either way, the result was the same.

A big fucking turn-on.

Good, he told himself. *This is going to be good.* He started walking again but stopped a few feet away.

When another man approached.

Scan here for the rest of Rue and Eli's epic story.

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Your Summer Horoscope

BY JAKE REGISTER

Aries
Heads-up, Aries: New connections, job offers, and travel opportunities are pouring in, so you need to stay on your toes. Your schedule will remain jam-packed until Gemini season is over in late June. Next up is a much-needed recharge during Cancer season before the nonstop pool party that is Leo season arrives.

Taurus
Jupiter finally leaves your sign on May 25, and after all your ~personal growth~ over the past year, it's your bank account's turn to thrive. Start stashing some cash in savings instead of blowing it all on little treats. You won't need 'em—Mars is in your sign for most of June and July, helping you kick ass.

Gemini
On May 25, Jupiter enters your sign, where it'll stick around for about a year. This is major for you, Gemmy, and will go a long way toward countering your (mostly) undeserved "fake" reputation. You're beginning to evolve into a decidedly more real version of yourself. Proud of you!

Cancer
We see you hiding in that crab shell, and that's more than okay. May and early June are all about shutting out the world so you can focus on your inner self. But when summer begins, it's time to get out there. Mercury, Venus, and the Sun in your sign starting around mid-June help make you a superstar.

Leo
Typically, if you can't be in charge, you prefer to fly solo, but that's not the move right now, Leo. You need to practice working *with* people. Some of them will soon be moving up, and before you know it, you're going to have friends in very high places—friends who remember how well you treated them.

Virgo
All eyes are on you at work, and if you perform well, the rewards will be unbelievable (if you do a shitty job instead, trust that there will be major consequences). Proceed with determination and try not to stress. You'll be garnering other kinds of recognition too, especially when you show up for the right reasons.

Libra
It's time to renew your passport, even if you don't have any confirmed plans (yet). While new career opportunities are on tap for the start of summer, the stars say you'll be traveling soon, be it a drive out of town or a 12-hour flight. Save some space on your cal for lots of playtime once Leo season begins.

Scorpio
Who and what really matter to you, Scorpio? Astrology is calling your attention to this question this season, because unless everything in your life is going perfectly (lol), you'll need to start cutting out some stuff. It's not all daunting though—summer is also throwing exciting opportunities of all kinds your way.

Sagittarius
You take pride in being independent and spontaneous (as you should), but...wouldn't it be nice to have someone along for the ride? Now's your chance to form important new relationships, whether that means a new bestie or the love of your life. Either—or both—will help you learn how much fun it is to have a ride-or-die.

Capricorn
Cancer season is your own personal cuffing season, making it likely you'll soon meet a new loved one (or at least a new lusted-after one). But first, you've got to work on banishing those bad habits so you can be your very best self this summer, ready and able to charm the pants off of anyone and everyone.

Aquarius
Hello to this ah-mazing astro weather! You're having a damn good time, especially on the love front—dating, hooking up, or really *going there* with your partner. Cancer season, which begins on June 20, brings your focus back to work for a bit (sorry) before all the fun starts up again at the end of July.

Pisces
Everyone else may be out there having the time of their lives, but you're catching up on R & R in May and early June. Then, after the summer solstice, love is in the air, sex is hotter than ever, and you're likely to find romance everywhere you look. So enjoy that nap and be ready for a wild end of the season.

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